THE Hudson REVIEW

PETER REDGROVE:
The Glass Cottage—a nautical romance

WENDELL BERRY:
The Clearing—a long poem

PHILIP HOBSBAUM:
The Rise of the Dramatic Monologue

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD:
Larkin Lives

MARVIN MUDRICK:
The Offending Member

Poems by CHARLES TOMLINSON, PHILIP LEVINE, JOHN TAGLIABUE, JOHN FANDEL, DAVID GALLER.

Dance Chronicle by MARCIA B. SIEGEL.

Reviews by BLANCHE H. GELFANT, J. E. CHAMBERLIN, ROGER SALE, FREDERICK BROWN, JOHN N. MORRIS.

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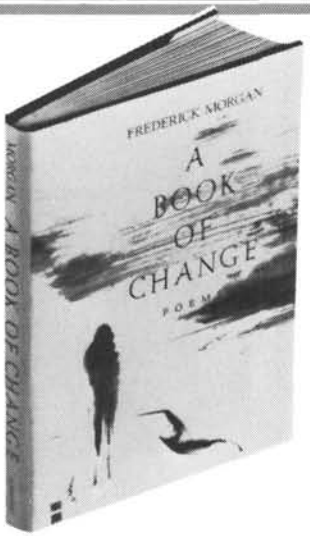

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'If you want to read a British poet who leaps with manic glory into sets of perceptions unreducible through art, Peter Redgrove is a pretty close approximation.' – M. L. Rosenthal, *New York Times*

Redgrove

Peter Redgrove is a poet, and now novelist, of unique vision and genius, whose writings have brought him wide acclaim in both Britain and America. A. Alvarez has called him a 'major poet . . . among the most serious British poets, probably the most brilliant technician of them all'; Gavin Ewart has described him as 'the most exciting British poet now active', and Philip Hobsbaum, as 'the great poet of our time', who 'wakes us up into a fresh awareness not only of the abysses of our existence, but of the ecstasies on which they depend'. • Of **Dr Faust's Sea-Spiral Spirit,** M. L. Rosenthal writes: 'Redgrove's private self comes directly into his difficult and troubling and exhilarating poems', and Irving Benig, *Library Journal,* described the book as 'filled with an energy too massive for words. A distinct volume, dotted with beautiful, curious lines.' • Redgrove's first novel, **In the Country of the Skin,** won him the coveted Guardian Fiction Prize in 1973, and was also dramatized by him for BBC Radio. Amongst the many reviews the book received, *The Times Literary Supplement* commented: 'His imagery is often surprising and beautiful . . . it has a brilliance and intensity one cannot but recommend.' • **The Terrors of Dr Treviles,** his second novel, was written in collaboration with another poet, Penelope Shuttle. Both in form and content, it is a highly original work, a joint vision of reality and magic interwoven with fine poems. • Most recently published is a selection of Redgrove's writing which has been drawn from all his published work, and includes some pieces of his dramatic prose.

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To Our Readers

We regret the omission of Richard Pevear's review "*Tatlin!*, or the Limits of Fiction" from the Spring 1975 Table of Contents.

Two new books by an editor of THE HUDSON REVIEW have recently been published. In accordance with our policy, they will not be reviewed in these pages, but are listed here for the interest of our readers:

HAYDEN CARRUTH: *Dark World.* Kayak. $2.00. *The Bloomingdale Papers.* University of Georgia. $7.50 cloth; $3.95 paper.

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Notes on Contributors

CHARLES TOMLINSON's most recent book, *The Way In* (Oxford University), was reviewed by J. E. Chamberlin in our Spring issue.

PETER REDGROVE, the English poet, novelist, and critic, has published in England many collections of verse and several novels. His most recent book of poetry is *The Alphaladybets* (Routledge and Kegan Paul). Mr. Redgrove is Resident Poet at the Falmouth School of Art, Cornwall.

PHILIP HOBSBAUM teaches in the Department of English of the University of Glasgow. His essay in this issue will be part of a book entitled *Tradition and Experiment* to be published by Macmillan.

WENDELL BERRY's essay "The Specialization of Poetry" was published in THE HUDSON REVIEW's Spring, 1975 issue.

PHILIP LEVINE's most recent volume of poetry is *1933* (Atheneum).

JOHN TAGLIABUE has published four books of poems, the most recent is *The Doorless Door* (Grossman). Mr. Tagliabue teaches Comparative Literature at Bates College and has just put together a new collection of poems called "Musicians' Planetarium."

DAVID GALLER* lives in New York and has published poems in various magazines and anthologies.

JOHN FANDEL's newest book of poetry is *The Deserted Greenhouse* (Roth).

FREDERICK BROWN is Professor of French at Stony Brook. His latest book is *Père Lachaise: Elysium as Real Estate* (Viking).

A collection of MARVIN MUDRICK's essays and reviews entitled *The Man in the Machine* was published by Horizon Press this Spring. Many of these essays originally appeared in this Review.

ROGER SALE is Professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle.

J. E. CHAMBERLIN's book, *The Harrowing of Eden: White Attitudes Towards Native Americans,* was published this Spring by the Seabury Press.

BLANCHE H. GELFANT* is Professor of English at Dartmouth College and the author of *The American City Novel.* She has published articles in various literary and scholarly journals on Faulkner, Hemingway, Woolf, Cather, Dos Passos, and others.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Prose Poem

If objects are of two kinds—those
  That we contemplate and, the remainder, use,
I am unsure whether its poetry or prose
  First drew us to this jar. A century
Ago, an apothecary must have been its owner,
  Thankful that it was airtight. And in spite of time
It remains so still. Its cylinder of glass,
  Perfectly seamless, has the finality and satisfaction
Of the achieved act of an artisan. Indeed,
  The stopper of ground glass, that refused
To be freed from the containing neck,
  Was almost too well-made. What had to be done
If we were to undo it, was to pass
  A silk cord around the collar of glass
And rub it warm—but this friction
  Must be swift enough not to conduct its heat
Inside—the best protection against which
  (Only a third hand can ensure this feat)
Is a cube of ice on top of the stopper.
  Whether it was the rubbing only, or the warm
Grasp that must secure the bottle's body,
  The stopper, once more refusing at first,
Suddenly parted—breathed-out
  (So to speak) by the warmed expanding glass.
Remaining ice-cool itself, when
  Lightly oiled, it was now ready again
For use—but not before we had tried
  Jar against ear to find the sound inside it.
It gave off—no seashell murmur—
  A low, crystalline roar that wholly
Possessed one's cavities, a note (as it were)
  Of unfathomable distance—not emptiness,
For this dialogue between air and ear
  Was so full of electric imponderables, it could compare

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Only with that molecular stealth when the jar
  Had breathed. There is one sole lack
Now that jar and stopper are in right relation—
  An identifiable aroma: what we must do
Is to fill it with coffee, for use, scent and contemplation.

Lines Written in The Euganean Hills

1

The tiles of the swimming pool are azure,
  Dyeing on breast and wings the swifts
That, transfigured, hunt its surface:
  This is man's landscape, all transfigurings
Across the thrust of origin—of rock
  Under schists and clays, their erratic
Contours cross-ruled by vine on vine:
  Over the table, flies are following-out the stains
Tasting the man-made, the mature stale wine.

2

An aridity haunts the edges of the fields:
  The irrigation jet, irising, arching
Across the cloud of its own wet smoke,
  Puts a gloss on the crop. But the cricket
Is raucous, the hoarse voice of that dust
  That whitening the grassroots of the burnt-out ditches,
Has webbed-over the spider's net with chalk.

3

Unshuttering vistas
mournfully the wizened
female custodian recites
snatches of Petrarch
whose statue cramped

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in the cellarage gesticulates
beside his mummified cat, Laura.

4

D'Annunzio saw it all behind golden mist,
A wavering of decay, vegetable, vast,
That had taken hold on each statue, each relief,
And was eating and unmaking them, as if leaf by leaf.
Two wars, and the mathematic of the humanist
Re-declares itself in white persistence,
Slogans scaling the plinths and walls where Mao
And Lenin dispute the Palladian ratio.

Images of Perfection

. . . What do we see
In the perfect thing? Is our seeing
Merely a measuring, a satisfaction
To be compared? How do we know at sight
And for what they are, these rarenesses
That are right? In yesterday's sky
Every variety of cloud accompanied earth,
Mares' tails riding past mountainous anvils,
While their shadows expunged our own:
It was pure display—all a sky could put on
In a single day, and yet remain sky.
I mean, you felt in the air the sway
Of sudden apocalypse, complete revelation:
But what it came to was a lingering
At the edge of time, a perfect neighbouring,
Until the twilight brought it consummation,
Seeping in violet through the entire scene.
Where was the meaning, then? Did Eden
Greet us ungated? Or was that marrying
Purely imaginary and, if it were,
What do we see in the perfect thing?

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Departure

You were to leave and being all but gone,
  Turned on yourselves, to see that stream
Which bestows a flowing benediction and a name
  On our house of stone. Late, you had time
For a glance, no more, to renew your sense
  Of how the brook—in spate now—
Entered the garden, pooling, then pushing
  Over a fall, to sidle a rock or two
Before it was through the confine. Today,
  The trail of your jet is scoring the zenith
Somewhere, and I, by the brink once more,
  Can tell you now what I had to say
But didn't then: it is here
  That I like best, where the waters disappear
Under the bridge-arch, shelving through coolness,
  Thought, halted at an image of perfection
Between gloom and gold, in momentary
  Stay, place of perpetual threshold,
Before all flashes out again and on
  Tasseling and torn, reflecting nothing but sun.

Death in Venice

Glass gauds from Murano.
The band at Florian's are drowsing
drowned in the syrup of their rhapsody.
A high stack
flaring-off waste from Mestre
hangs beaconed across water
where each outboard's wake
is flexing, unmaking those marble
images, bridals of stone
and sea, restless to have
that piled longevity
down and done.

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PETER REDGROVE

The Glass Cottage

with Penelope Shuttle

I PLAYED GAMES IN MY MIND with that boat. I called that liner, the ship of blood. Its colours were black and white, its colours to see. But I felt that its quality was the crimson of blood. This black and white vehicle with its funnels broad as garages banded in black and white, its white rails for white departing faces, to lean over their black stanchions, the black and white uniforms of its stewards and stewardesses, were nevertheless in truth ambulance colours, meat-wagon colours, for its cargo was blood, flesh and blood. Its demeanour was that of a sledge across the snowy-grey sea; it was a sledge packed with meat.

I wonder whether women traveling by ship synchronise their cycles so that they all menstruate together? Then it would be a great moonship, with towering sides. Nightly, it is a ship of fools. There are three bands, two playing rock and pop, and one playing genteel selections for the middle-aged, of whom there are a great many. There is a casino, like a great whirlpool in the middle of the ship, like a bath-plug down which the money pours. There is a cinema, attended by a silent dark minority. There are the cabins, very small under the water-line near the keel of the ship, growing in size and magnificence as the captain's bridge is neared. None can match in splendour the captain's quarters, and no one can reach these except by invitation. Invited, your steward must guide you along corridors that run through the liner from stem to stern, a thousand-foot length. Windowless corridors lighted by electricity and lined with honeycomb of steel cabins. The feeling there is of a great air-raid shelter. Some bomb is hovering overhead and will plunge through level after level, converting the lift-shafts to fountains of blood. Meanwhile the great shelter keeps its pattern in space of corridor and staircase, lift and swimming-pool, bureau and dance-band. Its bright lights stream over the dark sea, its bright lights keep the dark from peering in. Steel doors fit over the night and Atlantic weather outside. In the long corridors it is miles mined undersea, and the hum of the engines is the planet's motion.

*

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Three thousand miles is a long journey by water. I hold you in my arms and I feel the boat rushing through the miles of salt water. I have held you in my arms as the train hurries across countryside, now I hold you balanced on a steel shelf over unimaginable depths of the sea, like one page facing another in a black and white printed book in an enormous black and white travelling library. But I do not think that such size is unimaginable. We are naked and our forces flow, I stroke you wet and enter, we are no longer in a boat but traveling within each other, and we have not yet come to the end of our journey.

Afterwards you say that you saw the great cliffs of the coasts like the grandest of canyons, but the water was quite invisible, and the whole sea-bed lit up by the moon, resembling with its craters and pinnacles, the surface of that moon. Moon poring over moon. One small moonlit mote like a black and white gnat winged a solitary and unsupported course over the canyon, like a glider, a tight-rope walker. Then the stars blazed, and you lost sight of it. It is a pity, you say, that we have to use boats. If your shoes are leather, you say, the whole earth is covered with leather. Just now, our world is a black and white liner, with narrow beds. The cavernous seabed is metal-roofed.

*

The lights were on in the cabin as they so often are since our passengers pay no extra for electricity. I used my passkey and struggled in with my pail of rags and my brushes. Odd that they dress us so smartly in black and white, yet they give us such worn and ugly tools to work with. Traditional to the craft, I suppose. The lady lay on the bed, which was stripped. So was she, quite nude. Blood had run out of the cut high on her midriff, and had soaked into the sheet. My first thought was that she was asleep, then that she was as still as a photograph, then that she was bleeding and I must staunch the blood, then that she was dead. I forced myself to cross over the floor to the phone. I lacked a hand to pick it up, I got involved in a foolish way with the cord and the bucket. I dialed for the chief steward. "Are you alone Sir, this is Molly. I'm afraid one of the customers is wasted. Yes Sir, dead. Wounded. There's no knife that I can see. Cabin 2431." My hair, my face was soaked. I was crying and sweating. I looked in the mirror and saw the face on the bed. Black hair, white skin, red stab-wound on the bed. Black hair, white skin, white shirt, black tie, black skirt in the mirror. I un-

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pinned the tie and opened my shirt. The wound would be just above the waistband of my skirt. I pulled the skin there, I could see no wound. I unzipped the skirt and examined my body for the wound. Then I lay on the bed with the dead lady and tried to warm her. I felt between her legs to try and warm her and bring her to life. She was cool, but not cold. Her cunt was lax and sticky. I laid my hand there and slept. This is how they found me.

*

The English schoolteacher travelling to her exchange job in Canada was not at dinner, nor at breakfast the next morning. The steward looked uncomfortable and said she had not been feeling well. I went down to her cabin after breakfast. It was locked and I couldn't make her hear. I stood knocking at the door and I felt a light touch on my shoulder. The stewardess, who looked not unlike my friend, asked me to go with her. I was a little worried now. As we walked along I lit a cigarette. "Where are we going?" "The Chief Steward." This short and wizened officer sat in his office on One-deck. "I'm afraid your friend has had an accident," he informed me. I could not catch his glance. I thought she had probably been taken ill and was in the ship's infirmary. "No, she's dead. I'm very sorry to say that she was killed some time in the early evening yesterday." I thought of the afternoon we had spent in each other's arms fucking and dreaming. The throb of the engines grew louder and a swell seemed to hit the ship, heaving the room. I saw the moon-abyss of the Atlantic she had spoken of, and saw her falling, spinning into its depths. A cold knife-blade touched my lips. The rim of the drinking-glass clicked on my teeth and the ice-water made me splutter. "We have the criminal in the brig," the Chief Steward resumed, "it seems he was her lover. I must ask you not to mention this to any of the other passengers. The Lady's cabin will be sealed for police examination when we dock."

*

"It may seem rather harsh to tell a Professor he cannot visit the engine-rooms," said the Second Officer, teetering over me with his gin glass in his hand, "but I had to say this to an Admiral the other day. You see, we think if They don't know where the engines are, we're more difficult to hi-jack." "Is that a real possibility?" "It wouldn't be the first time. Though not on this line, thank God." "I suppose mines would be set and hostages taken from among the

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passengers." "We can't have first-class passengers walking the plank. Yes, I think they would shoot a few passengers and demand money for the lives of the others. We might have to set them off on some shore with their money—I don't suppose they'd want the ship, fearful old white elephant . . . meanwhile, passengers dead, whatever else." "Would life go on as normal?" "It would depend on their demands. A discreetly-managed hi-jacking would simply mean a few empty places at dinner and some strange faces on the bridge and in the radio-cabin, the visit of a helicopter, and the taking-off of some unidentified people, a tenseness in the staff and a sudden relaxation. . . ." "It could be going on at this moment in that case. . . ." But my last remark displeased the Second Officer and he swung away to talk to another guest. I eyed the stout man at my elbow with a doubtful smile, wondering whether to introduce myself. He bent confidingly towards me. "Have you heard about our murder?" he asked.

*

However early I get up, and stand in the living-room (where the drapes are drawn overnight for good ventilation) to perform my pranayam, the great cars are still gliding smoothly by. The campus is green, and the trees of it throb and pulse in the wind, and the yellowing leaves that scrape at the screen windows enter my meditation, but along the roads that curve like lemniscates through the emerald fields, the great cars glide; threads through silk from earliest light. They are as quiet as punts on the river or liners on the ocean, their design is utterly at variance with the trees they pass under or the actions of the wind their lines are presumed to stream: their designs resemble blunt mineral snapped from the rocks, gleaming at the fractures, conchoidal, with streaks of silver and fool's gold. The windscreens glide the reflective landscape and from where I sit cross-legged, doing my deep-breathing, it is not easy to be sure that the cars contain people. Where are these people traveling? There must be all-night sittings of the University Senate, or early administration meetings, or lectures on the rising of the sun and the setting of the moon, with field work and telescope sightings. The tiny observatory sits in the long grass of an upper meadow quite still and natural to the scene; perhaps this is because when it glides, it glides on its own axis, as a tree does, but if it plucked its dome from the turf, then it would glide as

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these cars do, and resemble them. They are traveling mechanisms for watching behind glass, and this uneasy observation never ceases, this uneasy traveling in the smoothest machines in the world. I have ridden in them, the seats are like dentists' or abortionists' chairs, the landscape goes past like a picture projected on glass by the smoothly-running engine whose only indication that a mile is passing in a minute is the speedometer, and the people outside are figures in some drama on television.

*

In my mind The Glass Cottage is that tiny and compact house with the thatch by the stream in Boscastle village. One turns off the high street and passes several gardens all plump with shiny leaves and loamy flowerbeds, with the green path very soft under the feet, and the cart-track swings round to the right and downhill to the little valley of oak trees through which that shallow active stream runs. Perched on its bank is The Glass Cottage. It is of light stone that will take a glow from the sunshine and a pale radiance from the darkness—it is a local quartz stone—and its windows are plain ordinary glass, except that this glass seems to have more to reflect since it is by the water, that busily breaks up the light like a quivering limb of electricity lying among enormous dock leaves big as tables and moss quiet as a yogin at prayer. Indeed I had imagined the softness and green vibrancy of this moss made up of the lotus postures of millions of transcending fat bodhisattvas so great that they had become numerous and small, and dedicated to softening footsteps in the resilience and pliability of their entranced bodies. If I looked closely I could see the crown of petals springing from the head of each master contemplative, a man well on his way to disappearing into the atom. I believe my thoughts may have taken this direction as there is a tea-shop in the village on the way called "The Green Buddha."

I have visited this cart-track, and felt my feet pacing it of themselves until the path opened up to reveal The Glass Cottage, perhaps a score of times. The quality of the Cottage is that on these occasions it remains empty. The owner never reveals himself, perhaps because the Cottage is waiting for me, its true owner. But as yet I have not got the key. I know that the Cottage is occupied, I have noticed bottles and glasses appear and disappear from a table spread with a brown cloth in the right-hand window, and there is

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not always a little car in the garage to the left, but I have no evidence that I do not live there in another state of mind, or in another time. I never peer closely into the windows in case I catch myself washing up, or pouring a glass of Guinness, or masturbating, or doing push-ups; or in case I catch another person doing these things and I am compelled to arrest him as a burglar. I have many photographs of the Cottage, snapped surreptitiously from the cart-track, or from further up the path where there is a kissing-stile; I would not care for the owner, myself, to catch me taking photographs of my own cottage out of which I stalk brandishing my stick and slamming the front door, angry at the liberty. I believe that the figure would not come out on the film if I held the camera, and would appear among all that colour of green and bright water, light stone and glass reflecting the busyness of the stream, the cream painted wooden front door and the beehives in the front garden, as a white silhouette, sheer blank white. Often there is a red tinge over the photographs taken in the evening which I cannot account for.

Further up the path, walking upstream, there is a perfect holy valley of oaks and beeches and a meadow that swells to a round mump. In this valley is a tree standing by itself whose boughs are so tightly pleached that it looks like a great circular basket on a stalk. To sit in this valley and do one's pranayam is to see visions of battles, cavalry and swift masculine death, and visions of the peace secured and watched over by these deaths. The Glass Cottage is a fitting hermitage by the singing water at the gate of this valley. At the time of the last visit, the water of the Atlantic was already lapping at my feet and at the foundation of my life, and the great liner had placed my name on its black and white rosters ready to float me off across the ocean chasm between the two worlds.

*

The university in the forest, in the lightly-forested meadows of the Catskill foothills. The great library in the forest, shining at night like a liner. The great library shining through its windows at the end of the willow-walk. The great library stuffed with light. Served with books by gentle stout homosexuals in vivid clothes walking like long-legged birds. Golden-trousered librarians, with paunches and pouts and very gentle voices dressed in light tan clothes and white clothes. The dustless, polished library in the

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forest with the avenue of willows that is like walking between the crests of two tall waves. The ruby earrings shining within the midnight afro hair.

*

Inside the walls of the glass cottage, he finishes his prose poem about the American cicadas. He lifts his eyes from the table to the open window where the stream flashes, and is amazed to hear no sound of cicadas. His eyes go down again to his poem, and his ears are at once full again of the shrilling in the trees.

She comes in and puts a cup of tea on his table. "I'm not disturbing. . . ?" "No, I've finished. Would you like to go for a walk? In the silence." "Is anywhere silent? There is always the sound of the stream here. I couldn't do without the knowledge that I'm going to come home to that sound. Or that sound can be found anywhere there is running water." "Let's go to Forrabury."

As they walked down the hill into the new part of the village, the air in the valley was essentially silent, even though it was overlaid with the noises of everyday living. Somebody was calling for his dog on the hill, the milkman was clanking his urns and his bottles in their wire racks. They turned to the left and climbed the hill towards Forrabury, the ancient church on the south headland. The breeze off the hill felt vibrant with its passage through the grasses and across the bare cliff faces. The preaching-cross on a mound by the lych-gate made them pause for a moment. Sometimes they preferred this granite shaft surmounted by the wheel-cross, to the church itself, that is, in high liturgical seasons. But now it was late summer, and the Christian year was long over. Now the older feelings of the church held sway from the ground beneath it.

The heavy wooden door of the church sealed them shut in its pillared gloom. The noise of it disturbed the echoes and they felt a moment's hostility towards them before the air currents settled. They were accustomed to this moment's alarm, as though the air in the church had been disturbed praying. Until it was over they stood still. For the air in the stone to examine them, and pass them, took about as long as their eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom. It accepted them, and they felt free once again to walk forward and find the place in the church they needed. He sat by the altar-steps, she on a pew near the front. Once the air had settled, they heard the shrilling again, a sound that seemed sometimes in their own

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ears, sometimes deep in the stone of the church, a humming as of wind through taut wires, shrill, but not faint once it was heard. It was always there, whether listened to or not. "Our Father," she prayed; "Mother of God," he prayed; "Our Father, Brother, Lover," she prayed; "Our Mother, Sister, Lover," he prayed; "Eternal Child and God," they prayed, "Child of the Moon and Sun, restore us, errant people, to thy communion. . . ." The singing in the stone accepted their prayer and steadied their minds, for it was the singing in their blood and in the hill's roots and in the sea. It was made of the sun's light, it was the sun's light made audible, and it was turned into a name by the circling of the moon. The whole world said this name as it circled the sun, as the sun circled its sun, and the name came as much from the red heart of the sun as from the red marrow of their bodies. The world inside accepted them, they stepped from the stone and the world outside accepted them.

*

Many years ago the thin elderly man who thought it correct to wear white on an ocean-going vessel during the daylight hours, had been a patient of the psychologist Jung. The former had been about fifty, and a successful journalist. He told the psychologist a dream which had made him dizzily happy. He had been standing on a mountain-peak on a cloudy day. Great sculptured clouds filled the sky and hid the sun. Suddenly a shaft of light broke from above and illuminated—no, tinged with gold the opposite mountain peak, which was at least twenty miles away. A light rain began to fall, and with it the dreamer understood that he had above all, at any risk, to get to that peak opposite, that if he did so his life would be transformed into a most marvelous thing. At that the clouds began to clear off the sun, but it rained still and a magnificent rainbow appeared, first as a coloured patch hanging above the valley between the two mountains, then as a magnificent arch which sprang from his feet to the opposite peak. It was translucent, and so bright it seemed solid. He stepped forward and touched it—it was solid. With a sudden decision he ran out on to it and found that it gripped his feet so that he was able to run lightly to the crown of the bow, and there he found the texture changed and he could slide down astride it like a polished stair banister. Gripping the rainbow between his thighs he sped down towards the peak of his heart's desire—and woke up, laughing with joy, his pajamas tacky with

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semen that had slipped out of him. The joy stayed with him for days, and he considered that the dream was the solution and culmination of his analysis.

Jung however was not so pleased. "Human beings walk on the ground. On the earth. The gods only walk rainbow bridges, and you are not a god. You are a man, and you must travel down the mountain and toil across the valley before you can ascend to the peak of your heart's desire." Jung's grumpy words impressed his patient. He gave up his job at the newspaper, and went back to the university with a grant as a mature student, and using the savings which he would otherwise have spent on the analysis. In seven years he had his Ph.D. Now he had retired from university teaching. The death of an uncle had made him well-off. He enjoyed the companionship of men of middleage who were beginning to realize that youth and opportunity were vanishing. He liked watching them put on weight, or adopt a sexually promiscuous life-style, or whatever means of self-discovery forced itself upon them. He would not intervene or advise, he would do no more than offer companionship and occasional assistance with small sums of money. He also maintained a small practice as a psychotherapist of young people.

Today he leaned over the rail of the black-white liner in his white clothes soaked in sunshine, watching the great sloughwake coiling its way back in the direction of England. He realized that he was traveling a bridge between two peaks of land on a black and white funicular held by water-cables over an immense watery abyss which would be, if he sank in it, little more resistant to a plunge than the rainbow valley of his dream. He would fall buoyed up like Alice or an insect down a mine, and he would be dead before he struck bottom and sent up his cloud-splash in the ooze. It was a black-white rainbow bridge but become more solid and matter-of-fact as befitted his age, and it remained to be seen whether America was his land of heart's desire.

*

The spirit of the boat tonight—who was it, he or she—romanced the Professor to himself as he wandered through the public rooms. Later, after dinner, at his usual table, watching the dancing, he saw her, a tall woman whose hair was as white as the ship's wake even though she could not have been more than thirty-five or so. She

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wore a black velvet sheath, a long dress, slashed high up for dancing, and her thigh flashed in the velvet like a wave-crest, a "white horse" seen from the deck at night in the light of the liner's blazing windows. These were the signs that made the Professor believe he had discerned tonight's habitation or materialization of the spirit of the great liner. It was his belief—no, hypothesis—that just as the consciousness of a man wanders at night in his dreams through the lighted and dark rooms, countries and landscapes of his own sleeping body, so the consciousness of the liner could at certain times every day and night afford to lose hold on the details of its functioning and instead wander, disguised as one of the passengers, through its holds, ballrooms and cabin-spaces. For all he knew, the spirit of the ship could detach itself completely from the vessel and, taking perhaps the form of a white-eyed wave or the great coiling wake (like a twisted umbilicus) the vessel trailed, issue into the ocean and explore the depths and make acquaintance with whatever consciousnesses swam that green gulf. He could not follow the spirit there, however, but in the vessel itself he had noticed that there was some person every night who had attached to him or her a certain imagery, or a glow, that showed they were more than mortal. They were rather the energies of steel plate and turbine, bow wave and stern wake, self-fashioned into human form. The first evening a waiter had dropped a pile of clean plates and they had fallen in the lap of a man sitting at a nearby table, striking his knee. All the plates shattered, and the man was non-committal to the waiters' anguished concern. The Professor kept an eye on this man during the meal, since the incident of the plates was not conclusive, the puzzling strength and imperturbability of the leg might have been due to its being artificial, made of steel plate like the hull of the ship—but would that in itself not have made him a suitable receptacle for the spirit? His imperturbability was more indicative. And did the spirit enter certain suitable passengers, or did it create those passengers? And if so, *when* did it create them? In the case of this woman in the black dress had the ship's spirit travelled back through time and entered the semen of the woman's father, preparing her for this voyage from her conception, allowing her the gift of life—perhaps in better health than other, unfavored mortals—for many years, as a mode of thanks for being the unconscious vessel of the liner's intentions. Might not the liner having entered this woman, conceive a child, a child that was of the ocean

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knowledgeable, as true and as faithful as the schedules of an ocean liner, of such broad emotion that it could unite the shores of the Atlantic in common understanding, and as strong as oil power and steelplate?

The Professor always made a practice of encountering those he had discriminated as such vessels of the spirit. He was not much of a dancer, but he would risk the ship's displeasure at this, so he got up and asked the white-haired woman for a dance. She seemed pleased, and they set out on their quickstep. She was an excellent dancer:

> . . . when you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o' th Sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that: move still, still so:
> And owne no other Function.

and since the Professor was a receptive man and a quick learner, they got on very well. They danced several times, and when the Professor bade his new friend good night with a smiling handshake, she leaned her head forward and kissed him on the cheek, with an equal warmth. The Professor went to his solitary cabin, very pleased by this encounter with the liner, within the liner. He sat down at the small writing desk and wrote up his notes.

At breakfast the young white-haired woman was puzzled and hurt. She smiled at her friend of last night from her table, but he stared coldly at her and turned away, sat down, opened a small black book and began writing in it. Perhaps, she thought, she had been too quick to show her pleasure in the dance, and it was a man's world, and he was a Professor in it. A pity. She spread some butter on thin toast and forgot about the Professor. Who was not worried. He had discerned the morning hypostasis of the ship's spirit in a small elderly man clothed in white he had met on the promenade deck, very freckled with age, but most intelligent to talk with, as he would expect the ship's spirit to be. Apart from the elderly man's insistence that he had never taken this voyage before, it was an agreeable half-hour. The professor lived in hopes of becoming an avatar himself. He could not imagine what the sensation would be like. He hoped he would remain conscious, like the possessed Voodoo priests with their quality of *la prise des yeux,* holding on to their watching eyes even though the gods rode their

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necks. After all, had he not made more serious, amorous encounter with the spirit of the liner once? He had not been able to find that lady again, and her cabin was always locked.

*

The liner floats on the waves like a large closed volume, its covers tooled in black and white. The sea keeps plucking at its pages but so far has not read it. The sea would like to become acquainted with the ship's contents, the ship sinking lop-sided down through the waves fitfully illuminated by its bursting boilers, and send its fishes to nuzzle through the staterooms, but so far the liner has displayed only its title—*S. S. Messenger*—proudly as it speeds like an inter-library loan between Goode Olde England and the Great Universal States. Perhaps the spirit of the liner read its manifest to the spirit of the Atlantic while the rest of us slept.

The sirens called us out to our emergency stations by the lifeboats for our boat drill. We had lifted the little trapdoors in the wardrobes to find the clumsy stiff orange jackets, and with difficulty we followed the printed instructions that showed us how to wear the lifejackets correctly so that even if flung into the sea unconscious we would float in our ballgowns watery with diamonds with nose and mouth out into the air, so that the sea would not become too thoroughly acquainted with our contents. Now we stood in groups lumpishly dressed in the horrible non-fitting gear, deprived of human form, the children among us blowing shrill whistles and falling over and having to be helped up because with those things on they *rolled,* submitting ourselves to the ministrations of the sharp-eyed purser and his master-at arms, a steel-eyed petty officer, who did not care if we was paying customers or not we had to wear lifejackets as trimly and correctly as him and his staff by bugger; and meanwhile the orchestra stood aside like inhabitants of another world on their platform fiddling with their instruments, couthly and slimly dressed, taking no part or notice as if they were all merely notes of music and could in the event of a disaster detach themselves and float calmly away over the sea; or they would play us hypnotically down into the water with sprightly and serious hymns, their bubbles bursting in music, uncaring; or, at the last moment when the brine lapped at the plate glass doorway of the first class ballroom, lead the piping procession up on to the deck and at the end when they had seen us musically installed in our

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lifeboats in beaming rows simply pour themselves by breathing out more thoroughly than usual through their instruments (the fiddler has his fiddle-raft) and float away as a complex pattern of vibrations to some station where they can be reconstituted by the musicians' union.

*

She had lost her quartz stone. They had made love on her sofa, discarded clothes all over the room, and when they got up and separated their garments, they could not find her pendant with the glittering stone fastened to it. "I will buy you another and better one," he said gallantly, but she would not be comforted and her afterglow turned to irritation. "My Dear," he said, "that great stone always looked to me like your wisdom; often when I did not know you as I do now I would glance at the great stone hanging at your throat and I would say to myself 'that is she, collector of light, many faceted distributor of light.' Now we have made love together the stone has somehow evaporated; we shall find it together; it is like a dew that has melted in the daytime; even now it is forming again in some secret place; perhaps within you somewhere." But nothing he could say, nor his love, would compensate her for the loss of her stone. She had had it from her teacher; she believed it had magic powers, for she could look into it as it twirled on the end of its chain and doing so brought vivid and logically interesting pictures to her reveries. Now it was gone. She sent him away crossly; when he had left the room and the flat she set about taking up the carpets and moving furniture to find her stone.

The steward took her cases and barged open the stateroom door with them. "There you are Miss," and turned away before she could give him a tip. She realized that tips—hefty ones—were expected when the voyage was over, and that meanwhile there was a pretence of disinterested service, gladly and freely given, by highly paid crew members not concerned with gratuities, but only in keeping the passengers happy. She loved the stateroom with its light wood and its fitted furniture, the tiny bathroom tucked neatly behind the entrance to the cabin. She began to unpack her nighties and other best things, hanging them up in the cupboard. She felt something fall out of the front of her dress, and lie glittering on her night-clothes. It was her quartz pendant! How had it got there, was it caught all that time in a seam of this dress? But it had been to the

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cleaners! At any rate it was back, and she was free from *that* lover, whom she privately suspected of having actually purloined this quartz and crystalline portion of her identity. But that was not so, and she had found it again, and that made her very happy. She would look into it after her bath, maybe it would tell her its adventures. She wound up her rather dressy small gold wristwatch and went in for her bath.

*

Opulent archives in the lake, in the towers of the library. In the gardens of the library wet footprints. A bush of red berries that are replete with mosquitoes. A bush of claws that are the plant's leaves. A ruined room with the river running through the end of it, but that is in England. The fly snatched at his sleeve. The guilt of that little murder may have infected every person that travelled on the vessel. It was as though the spirit of the liner had been summarily dismissed by means of blade. How it would wing its way upwards, the great black and white liner sprouting gold wings and heaving off the sea's surface, plucking its great keel out of the waves and rowing off into heaven, a dark speck against the moon. Meanwhile the ghostless substructure of spiritless metal and electricity left behind merely dragged its way to New York. Had anybody told? Had the murderer been caught? Had the liner's spirit entered the body of some uninspired policeman and dedicated him to feats of detection? Only a little murder of a school teacher with an itchy cunt and a big quartz pendant. But the strict black and white galleries cried out for blood! The sea turned into blood that clotted into bloodburgs that softly stank and clung so that until a tiny figure—whether man or woman he couldn't tell—ran out onto the deck and cried, "I did it—take me," the great clotted screws of the ship coiling a bloody taffy could take them no further. The tiny murderous figure stands there, mouth calling, a black dot in a white face like a hole in a star, and as the confession echoes in the Atlantic air the seas with a sigh turn white and clear once again, uniformed figures escort their murderer below decks, and the liner resumes its spanking speed through sparkling waters to the tall lighted windows of New York.

*

Death kept on coming for him like a great black and white ship lined with red, red plush walls, red carpets, red mirrors, red engines run on red oil. The crew and officers dressed in red jacket and trousers with little red ties and red badges of office difficult to see against the other reds. He encountered this death first of all in

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the gardens of the English sea-college. There he was walking along the flowering garden paths considering the green fingers that had won the Britain-in-Bloom competition for the last five years running, when he heard a call from somewhere above his head, "Ahoy there! You in the garden! Ahoy!" He looked round him puzzled for he knew the garden was usually empty in the early afternoon, and he paused, for there was a jovial urgency in the cry which seemed pleasant. "Ahoy!" Then he lifted his eyes and thought he must have wandered nearer the road than he had realized, for there, surely, was the new block of flats. But then he realized that the tiers of windows rising above his head were all round, like portholes, and the apartment block was slowly gliding from left to right towards him as he watched. "Ahoy there!" He tilted his head and took off his hat and saw for the first time the size of the thing. A smart red-dressed figure was leaning over the highest rail and calling him with a megaphone. He cocked his head to the call and took an involuntary step forward, then a perspiration swept him as he saw a breeches buoy made of red cord and canvas swinging slowly down the black-and-white side of the great ship. His hand came up and wiped his forehead and pushed forward as if to wave and then changed as if to shove the sight away, "No. . . ." He turned then away from the ship and found that his feet could scarcely lift from the ground but with effort he broke into a stumbling run. "Ahoy . . ." faded, over his shoulder he saw the stern of the great ship trailing a coiling wake like a bleeding birth-string with a great rasping through the boughs and twigs of the trees. He saw a holly-bush crushed under the margins of the thing, he saw water foaming white under the turf which was slowly sealing up as he watched. The road at the end of the gardens slowly came into view and he heard a long trailer lorry grinding up the hill. He was able to forget the visitation with the help of this lorry which, or so he persuaded himself, might easily have given him a feverish vision of death; they were known at the time as "juggernauts" and were held responsible for many accidents on the motorways.

One evening he had been working late over his books in the library. A class bell rang—perhaps by short-circuit, classes had long since finished for the day—and he looked up from the table and his manuscript; for a long moment relished the lights of the library reflecting in the great lake. He noticed then that the lights were all circular and the colour of them was red, and that they towered higher than the great willow trees. A lifeboat was being lowered over the side of the vessel on lengthening red cables, and as he watched, touched the lake water. No ripples blurred the reflec-

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tions. It cast free; in a ruddy glow he could see figures bending over their oars and a slim white figure in the stern-sheets like a cox-swain. He rose from the table clutching his manuscript and swung the window open on to the library terrace. Slowly he walked out as the lifeboat reached the shore, the oars were shipped, and the cox-swain stepped nimbly ashore. "Ahoy!" she called, and he felt himself step towards her down the terrace stairs, but then he stopped because he saw all the library windows opening and many people stepping out of the windows, some in modern dress, some dressed in fashions of bygone times, and each with a book or books clutched under his or her arm. As he watched, the spirits left the library in cheerful talkative groups and boarded the lifeboat, that seemed no fuller for its freight, nor were the reflections troubled, nor did the water rise on its sides. He started forward but as he came closer he saw that the woman was nude, and had a wound in her right side, high up on the abdomen. He stopped in fear. The woman turned sadly away and stepped into the boat, pushing the shore away as she stepped, and the lowered oars glowed red in the lake water. One by one the portholes went out, and the library reappeared in the lake. He was at the library table, and the books in that reflected library were as much good to him as their originals, for when he glanced at one before him on the table, preparatory to closing it up and putting it away, he found that he could not understand the type. He took his pocket-mirror out of his briefcase: the book was printed in mirror-writing. So was that book, and this: he had read about this condition: the nerve-pathways to the hemispheres of the brain reversed spontaneously, or as a result of prolonged emotional stress, and the person afflicted became his mirror-self, his own doppleganger.

*

The two lay at rest in the water-flower in the glass cottage. The tap-roots of the water-flower stretched along the walls and up behind them deep into the ground, where they fastened to the great straight root that ran to the roots in the great hill reservoir. The stem of the water-flower ran down beneath the bath and beneath the ground also, but gathered anastamoses as it travelled beneath the roads until it met the great sewerstem that branched and flowered into the ocean. The roots were above them, the branches below, and they lay at rest in one of the clear bell-flowers of water that budded along these vines. They lay as though at the bottom of

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the sea, stretched out in Davy Jones' locker. They could feel, or thought they could feel, in their clear soapless water, the rains prickle gently on the hills, the rains that had fitted themselves together into the reservoir, and the tide of the sea that pulled all waters with it. It was an altar of the water-church, or a peaceful tomb of the same communion. If they did indeed one day lie at the bottom of the sea's branches, bedded in sea-flesh of ooze, skeletons full of windows through which the sea-life swum, the moist-air currents fashioning the great stem from which the white clouds budded and the clear rain fruited, all the water of the world would flow past the bones of the lovers, and this water-shrine of pleasure was good practice for that state of being. "One thousand black-coated clergymen are at this moment raising me to their lips and gargling with me in preparation for their Sunday sermon," she said, "And in an hour's time they will reject jugs of me for the bottled variety with a little colouring and some alcohol. That will be the Spanish branch of my corpse." "People have died before," he said, "and been drowned. And their bodies have entered the whole world, just as ours does." "We were made of them to begin with," she replied, "and I did not say we do not have companions in our good fortune." The sea entered their rooms which dissolved like sugar and became green slowly beating caverns larger than America and England combined, their bones rolled in the knowledge that was coming to them as they touched, and penetrated, and lay in the water-flower like the world, and the seeds of it. The water grew cold swiftly and she got out, put on a towelling dressing gown and boiled water for coffee while he got dressed. "Where did these barnacles on the mirror come from," he called laughing. "Pull the other one," she called back, "it's got sea-slugs on it."

*

The Willaparks was the grassy bluff that rose to the south of Boscastle: the sea-cliff thatched with turf and breaking away to sheer cliffs into the sea. You walked towards the harbour, a very Aegean appearance, with a long pier of big, square blocks of stone shutting off the mouth of the bay and leaving a narrow gap for the fishing vessels, that at low tide lay all around tilted on the coarse sand. You climbed along the path to the left, which gave a very fine view of the great stone that dominated the bay, a peninsula that the sea would in another few centuries convert into a true islet. For how many thousands of years before the reign of that monarch this stone

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had resembled a sculpture of the widowed Queen Victoria, nobody but a geologist could have surmised, but the resemblance was so striking, with the snub nose and the uptilted chin, the headdress and the little veil, that one wondered that the seagulls dare sit on it and scream at it as they wheeled about. Most of them indeed preferred the truly isolated boulder, white as a wedding cake with their feathered bodies and their droppings, that lay further out to seaward: at one time this must have made another arm to protect the land: now the stone pier and the rearing head were the two interdigitating redoubts of defense, and the linking stem of the head's peninsula was deeply burrowed by the persistant sea. At all high tides one could hear the regular booming of the waves, the shock under the feet as the water struck the walls of underground caverns; at low tide the entrance to one of these caves was visible, in regular pulses spuming white into the green from an entrance the size of a small railway-tunnel.

Queen Victoria stared directly at the Willaparks. The Willaparks stared back with a deep, a very deep and sheer cleft in the rocks where the sea was separating *them* from the land. The climb up on to the grassy cliff where the white coastguard station perched was not severe, the path had a gentle slope, and there were seats placed for a full view of Queen Victoria. The woman who lived in the Glass Cottage had climbed up there today specifically to think about Queen Victoria, and widowhood, and the lot of women in the world, and there was a silly little tune going through her head "since you were not married you are not a widow, no need for sorrow, no need for sorrow." The Glass Cottage would have to be given up, sold, and she would have to return to London to work, probably as a secretary or teacher. She sat and watched the white wave pump out of the cliff tunnel again and again, and could raise no emotion about her loss, it was too great. The move was beginning to worry her, and she wondered if she could cope with London, but apart from that it was all apathy. "Probably," she thought, "because he was drowned at sea, and there was no funeral to help me mourn." So she sat instead and stared at the natural effigy of the widowed Queen, and tried to feel bereaved. The white wave shunted again and again out of the tunnel in Victoria's neck, with the noise of trains and with a distant thunder, it was like a white door in the black cliff, or like lightning in a black cloud. A little squall blew across the bay towards her, roughening the waves and

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producing with the fitful sun a brief column of bright coiling colours, and dashed against the cliff and vanished. She got up from the seat, deciding she would walk up and across the Willaparks to Forrabury Church, and find the Sound there. At the top of the path she turned left, inland, where the cultivated strips were—almost the only place in Britain where strip-farming had survived—and started along the green path. As she walked Forrabury Church Tower rose out of the land, out of the small dip that had concealed it. On the long straight path the turf grew very short and implanted with moss. She did not know the reason for this, unlike the other path, it had not been constructed with gravel and sand, but simply grew, or perhaps the sheep nibbled it. The path gave no sound of footsteps; she glided. Coming towards her was a tall woman wearing an immense white hat that deeply shaded her face. The woman from the Glass Cottage stepped to one side with a polite smile as they passed, she could not clearly see the other woman's face, and was startled when the other shot out an arm and gripped her by the wrist, and began to draw her closer. "Child," she said, "look." The young woman felt a sudden pain in her side and saw herself stretched out on a small white bed. A woman in a uniform carrying pails came through the door, caught her hand to her mouth. "Look." She saw herself sliding a key into the lock of a shabby flat. "Look." She saw herself walking under foreign trees bearing enormous catkins. "Look." She saw herself taking her bath in the Glass Cottage, but it was not with her dead lover, it was with another, darker man. "Do not leave the Glass Cottage, you will receive the death due to another woman at a madman's hand." "Who are you!" She woke to herself in Forrabury Church, the tall woman was holding her hand and they were standing at the front as if it were an altar. The church was perfectly silent, as if attentive. The woman slid the wooden lid off the font, dipped her finger in the water, signed her forehead with it, signed the young woman's. The water was icy cold, or burning, it seemed to go right through to the back of her head. Her womb gave a great thump, a shudder that made her see white for a moment like sea spuming from a tunnel cave with the whole fetch of the Celtic Ocean behind it, and she staggered back feeling for the support of a pew. "What is your name?" she said, and then the twining wires inside her head darkened as something like a great flock of swallows settled on them with a beautiful chirrupping, high and silvery. She felt

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wetness on her chest and realized that she had been crying so copiously as to darken the collar and front of her blouse. She was sitting and her legs were stiff, the chuch was dark and she had no idea how long she had been sitting there. The singing in the silence had returned. She thought of her lover, but a new emotion was there, it was as though she could see that he had passed through the world leaving a wake of energy, and the world was better for it, and she could feel in herself the energy that he left, like the wake left by a superb ship plying between two shores. She walked with a firmer step to the church door. As she stepped out into the little diamond-shaped graveyard she stopped astonished. The Willaparks were spread out in front of her in the light of sunset with beauty that she had never seen before, every blade of grass distinct, every tree, every cloud itself and no other, passing for a moment through the world, as she was. She felt that there was a tale to each one of them, and this tale told the truth, but there was no sadness in the way things and people left their track across the world, like a signature of what they were. She would call these tales "The Tales of Willa" after Willa's Parks in which she first saw them, and she would write them in the Glass Cottage. She realized that the great head of the Queen at the harbour's entrance was and always had been Willa's head. She realized whose face the dark shadow under the white hat had also been.

*

The portable Jung in the ship's library opened at these words:

> Psychology teaches us that, in a certain sense, there is nothing in the psyche that is old; nothing that can really, finally die away. Even Paul was left with a thorn in the flesh. Whoever protects himself against what is new and strange and regresses to the past falls into the same neurotic condition as the man who identifies himself with the new and runs away from the past. The only difference is that the one has estranged himself from the past and the other from the future. In principle both are doing the same thing: they are reinforcing their narrow range of consciousness instead of shattering it in the tension of opposites and building up a state of wider and higher consciousness.

The blackboard outside the library that announced the results of the ship's daily lottery, today remarked also that at 11:33 AM by the ship's clocks they would be exactly half way between the old world and the new.

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A black and white funicular runs on a cable stretched between two mountain villages, one bathed in early sunlight, one still asleep in the shadow of the great peak. A group of people have elected to travel down the mountain at the earliest dawn. As the golden bars of sun shine on the night-fall of fresh snow, they converge on the cable-car office, muffled in their parkas and gloves and heavy boots, black figures in contrast to the snow, hulking past the pretty fret-work houses still shuttered in the early light. They enter the cable-car, an official of the railway is waiting for them, and touches his glove to the peak of his pill-box hat as they each in turn enter. With a ringing of bells the cable-car disengages itself, and begins its de-scent of the mountain-side, the ride that in daytime expounds the valleys, but which now is a journey back into the night-time. In the valley-pass, the full moon is still visible, straight in front of them, sinking as they glide towards her in their air-gondola. Suddenly one of the women is conscious of the humming wire that bears them up, and she looks up at it and its pulley-supports through the glassed roof, as one might look up at a mast or the funnel of a steamship. She is conscious of the music the wire makes as it vi-brates between the two villages, the drone of the icy winds across it, the change of its note as the sun heats it and the cold night contracts it, and the note it makes when it is laden with people, and unladen. She remembers in the schoolroom in the upper village, where she grew up, the master shows how the iron filings arrange themselves on white paper when the magnet is placed below the paper, it is as though they have been waiting for a purpose to follow, and they form a blank bar-space where the magnet's field is too strong for them and they cannot enter it, with two proud bushes of feathery iron spreading from ends, just as the two villages seem to have ar-ranged themselves at either end of the abyssal note sung by the cable-car. Of course the villages were here long before the funic-ular, but the feeling remains that the mountains in their huge glistening hides came here to listen to the song of the iron that was taken from their sides. People travel great distances to listen to some musician distinguished from among them, and it seems to her that a safe cable-car full of thinking, seeing jellies is a high point of geological evolution, she feels like a specimen being passed for ex-amination in front of the eyes of geology. Something flashes from a distant snow-slope; it is an early skier, perhaps he had his binoc-

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ulars out and is watching them. She feels that the mountains always intended this cable to be here, to give themselves a good sight of travellers more difficult to inspect when crouched in villages on their flanks, or skiing along their crusty pelts. And they intended this music, this hum, both bass with the length of the cable and seemingly high also with the sense of the minute particles in it, as the mountains are both large and small at once, enormous in their mass, but with a mass made up of infinitely figured individual objects and particles, like snowflakes and granite-crystals—God's thoughts. While she felt these things, and felt that the cable stretched between two destinations stood for more than she could see in a short trip between two villages, the men sat together in a huddle. She glimpsed money pass, and a white paper packet; she thought: fools, these criminal actions are likely to get us shot at by rival criminals, why choose this vulnerable and beautiful occasion to trade in heroin.

There was a clang from above. The bracket holding the cable had engaged in its iron slot, and the car was once more rigid at its station. They stepped out on to the concrete platform, and with muttered good-mornings, strode away separately through the snow-lit streets. She walked towards the red glow of the steam locomotive that waited in the small railway station, since her way led down the mountains towards the sea. The furnace door was open, and she could see the driver's silhouette as he bent shovelling coal into the redness. The red eye in the black hulk closed, and the small clang of the closing door came to her clearly across the snow, together with a whiff of the sulphurous coal. She climbed into one of the tall carriages with its buttoned, plush upholstery, and settled down to watch the journey. There were three thousand miles to go towards her new home, and she thought as the sun's gold touched the slopes in front of her, that she was travelling with the sun in the direction of the moon. She did not know which of the two opposite kinds of light she loved most, she loved both of them in their different ways.

*

I want you to understand, said the poet, that we are ruled by the moon. I don't mean poets, I mean all men. Women are ruled by themselves, by the moon-nature in them; that is, they are not ruled by the moon: they are the moon. It is in this manner that they are our door to the universe: the moon walks about on the surface of this planet. And the moon, as womankind and its own self, is the

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Grail. This is the meaning of the saying, the World is in the Grail and the Grail is in the World, since the World is within the spiral tidal influence of the Moon, and womankind also ruled by this influence, walks and talks and makes love and discovers and rules on the surface of the World.

So far, I am saying no more than what you may dismiss as simple poeticizing. What is this talk of Grails and Moon-goddesses, you may say, turn it into poems, lad, and be respected. Very well then, I will tell you what you do not wish to know, in case you find that woman is a goddess, and that you are her consort and must perform the responsibilities of a consort, or lose the World. You have forgotten if you ever knew that the flowers of human reason and ability have roots, and these flowers spring from what roots are compelled to burrow and feed in, the soil, the disjecta, the despised of the world.

If a man resists his destiny, even if he is only a child, then we know he falls ill. The illness may be a first warning, and in that illness he may have dreams or visions which give him information concerning that destiny. He may still ignore these, being told by his doctors or parents or companions that such visions and dreams are mere epiphenomena of his illness, merely phantasms. Then in due course he will become well, and the visions will have gone, and something in him that was alive will have left also, for the reason that he did not heed the voices in him. If a man resists his destiny, even if he is only a child, then he will fall ill.

Will you now tell me what time of his life a man has the greatest chance of falling ill? (Voices from the audience: *After potato chips and beer with the late, late horror show* (Jeers). *At puberty. When he is in love. After divorce, or separation.)*

You are quite right of course, all of these affect one's sensitivity to the inner voices and the outer infection (which may also be a voice) even the potato chips and beer, for beer is a little wicket gate into the unknown, just as puberty is. But you have the incorrect emphasis. The statistics show (the lights dim and an immense graph appears on the screen behind the lecturer's head) that a man has an increased chance of illness in particular once a month. That often. Or a chance of initiatory dreams, of ideas, of deep-drawing instinctive love, or whatever way his destiny takes him. And here is the other half of the graph, superimposed on the last. Because woman has also an inevitable chance of being sick, or if she accepts *her*

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destiny, her visions, understanding of herself, if she understands and watches into her bodily changes, an inevitable chance of being exceptionally well, exactly once a month. (Gasps from audience.)

*

Grettel was just ten. Her mother had altered so much recently. Disagreement with the pots and pans in the kitchen at every mealtime, scalding liquids splashed, plumes of smoke and the clashing of saucepan lids: Grettel no longer enjoyed making a doll house out of the kitchen table when mother was cooking. Gone were the days when Grettel could go anywhere she pleased—her mother had actually boxed her ears when she found the little girl trying on one of her skirts. It was as though another mother had arrived in the house, and her voice had acquired a punch and a timbre to it that made little Grettel's head ache.

One day Grettel's little brother, Hansel, took her by the hand. "Our mother has changed so," he said, "that life in her house no longer seems worth living. She cooks our food, yes, but with such cursings and swearings that it is difficult to swallow. If we go near her when she is in a calmer mood, she pushes us away, saying she is too busy. The little dog is in a better position than we are, since when she swears at him, he bares his teeth and snarls back, and this amuses her, and she gives him some food. Grettel," he said, "let us travel over the world and find a better household and a better mother."

So they walked all day long over the meadows and they came to a forest. At the edge of the forest they found a hollow tree to sleep in, all soft and odorous inside, and they wished that this was their home, so they crawled inside and slept soundly.

In the morning, the sun was shining and the tree felt safe and strong, but Grettel's head ached and Hansel complained how thirsty he was. They took each other by the hand and went in search of a brook until they saw the water-light reflecting through the trees, smelt water in the air, and heard the whispering gurgle of the running water. Hansel lay on the mossy bank, stretched out, and dipped his hand in the water to drink—but suddenly Grettel stopped him. "Sister, what is the matter, I am so thirsty!" "I heard the stream speaking to me. It whispered: 'Whoever drinks me will turn into a tiger.' Brother, I am so afraid that you will be turned into a tiger and make me bleed with your great claws, and tear me

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in pieces in this beautiful place." "Very well, Grettel," replied the brother, "we will drink from another stream."

They came to another stream, and Hansel bent to drink, but his sister cried out, "Ah Hansel, do not drink here, you will be turned into a wild wolf and tear me to pieces. I heard the stream whispering 'Whoever drinks me now will be turned into a fierce wolf who will eat his sister.' " "Sister, I am so parched. Come what may, I will drink at the next stream." So they travelled on, and when they came to the next stream, it spoke to Grettel: "Whoever drinks here will become a fawn," so she said to her brother, "Dear Brother, do not drink here either, for you will be turned into a fawn, and run away from me." "Nevertheless," replied Hansel, "I must drink from this stream, for it is time for me to quench my thirst." So he crouched on the bank and put his lips to the water, and as soon as he did so his clothes became a velvet skin, and his hair dwindled until it became velvet, and his eyes grew large and dark, and he turned into a fawn.

Grettel wept sadly over the poor creature by the stream bank, and the fawn looked sadly back at her. "Don't fret, poor beautiful creature. I will always stay with you and take care of you, and we will find a place where we can live together." She took off the golden necklace she wore and put it round the fawn's neck, and she made a soft cord of rushes to lead it. Further into the peaceful wood they went, and after they had travelled most of the day, they came to a little abandoned woodman's cottage.

So Grettel took some twigs, and fastened them to a branch, and swept out the cottage. She gathered moss and leaves and made a soft bed for them both; and in the fresh morning sunlight she gathered nuts and berries for herself to eat, and young grass for the fawn, who ate out of her hand, and played and frisked with her, and made her very happy. "If only poor Hansel could turn into his proper self, how happy we should be," she thought.

It happened that the king of the country in which the forest grew and in which Hansel and Grettel lived their lives was fond of hunting deer in company with his court, and with dogs, and that he held his hunt on this occasion near to the little woodman's cottage. When the fawn heard the dogs baying and the horses neighing, the hunting horns and the shouts of men, he lifted his head and sniffed the air, and said, "Dear Sister, the hunt is very sweet to me, I must go out and be hunted, and try my wits against the pack." Grettel

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was horrified that he should wish to risk all that they had together, but he pleaded so long and so hard that at last she agreed that he should join the hunt. "But promise me that you will return in the evening," she said, "tap on the door and say, Sister, Sister, let me in, and you will be safe again. But be sure to use those words, otherwise I will not know who it is, and I will not open the door." So the fawn sprang out of the cottage and into the woods, and before long the huntsmen caught sight of it, and blew their little horns, and galloped after it, but however hard they tried they could not keep up with the fawn, who leapt into a thicket and was gone just as the sun set. So the king gave up the hunt for that day, though he was determined to try for the fawn the next day, and the little animal crept home in the darkness and tapped on the door of the cottage and said, "Sister, Sister, let me in," which she did.

The next morning they were woken by the sounds of the hunt, and the fawn lifted his head, and his nostrils flared and he said, "Sister, I must go out and join the hunt again, for the sun is high in the sky, and the dogs are barking and I can smell the resin of excitement in the air." So his sister let him out, reminding him that he must say when he tapped at the door, "Sister, Sister, let me in." Once again, when the king and his huntsmen caught sight of the fawn with the golden collar they gave chase, and they hunted all day, but the little fawn was too quick and clever for them. Not quite clever enough, however, because at one point he was nearly surrounded, and one woodsman wounded him in the foot before he could take his great leap into the thicket behind which the little cottage stood, and he jumped lamely, and the woodsman was able to follow him home. The man crouched by the door as the little fawn tapped on the door and said, "Sister, Sister let me in," and as the door closed he wheeled and ran back to the king, to tell him all that had happened. The king said only, "Then tomorrow we will have another chase."

Grettel was terrified to see that the fawn had begun to bleed. She washed the little wound, and applied healing herbs, and told the fawn that it must go to bed now, and rest, and in the morning it would be well again. To be sure, in the morning no trace of the wound was to be seen, it was so small; but when the horns blew and the dogs began to bay, the little fawn said, undeterred by his experience, "Dear Sister, let me go out into the sunshine and the chase. If I do not I shall die here. But when I hear the horns blow I

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feel like an animal that could fly!" So Grettel had to let the little fawn out of the cottage once again.

All day she waited, lonely and frightened in the little cottage they had shared so happily. Now, she believed, he had gone out in the wood to his death, perhaps even now he had been pulled down, and the hunstmen were sharing his poor body among the hounds, huntsmen splashed with blood and with red knives and darkened arms. The sun set, and it was quite dark when a soft tapping came at the door and a whisper, "Sister, Sister, let me in," and with great joy she got off the bed where she had been lying and went to the door and opened it. A tall man stood there, with a golden crown; it was not her fawn who had returned, but a crowned king! Grettel was so frightened at this, but very fascinated, and became less frightened when the king took her by the hand and spoke kindly to her. "Will you come with me to my palace and be my wife?" he said. When the door opened he did not know what to expect, some woodland ogre or witch perhaps, and he kept his hand firmly on his sword. But there stood one of the most beautiful maidens he had ever seen, and his heart went out to her at that moment. "I will come with you," replied the maiden, "but if you have killed my fawn, I will kill you in your bed." But then the little fawn with the golden collar sprang over the threshold, and they all stood together in great happiness in Grettel's woodland cottage, and the woodsman slammed down on the table a great bloodstained pouch containing the carcass of the deer that they had caught in the wood, together with two rabbits, and they all laughed happily, thinking of the great banquet that was to come, for it was a long time since Grettel had had a piece of meat to eat.

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The wild hunt, said the poet, and the shedding of blood: in this drama there are at least three personages: a king and a queen and a beast, and there are many transformations which vary according to the times we live in. There may be a king and a queen and the beast is an anthill, or a termitary; or the king may dissolve into the Houses of Parliament; the Queen seeks her daughter or the daughter seeks her mother, and this is like the quest of Demeter for Persephone. The king may be the beast, until the queen releases him with a loving kiss; or the king may release the queen (who may begin as a commoner or a princess before she becomes queen) by

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cutting through a dense and tangled wood inhabited by beasts. But whatever else, all the tales, told at the mother's or nurse's laps, speak to the child of what is coming to her, or coming to him through her: the changes and the shedding of blood. If the boy grows up refusing this knowledge and refusing women, there will still be changes and shedding of blood, for that is inevitable, but the change will be an icy one, and the blood will be shed by men in battle, and the less that is listened to, the greater will be the war. One day these changes will be known and followed by man and woman alike, who will be agile in their transformations, and, as the Apocryphal gospel says, "The garments of shame will be trampled underfoot, and the male will become as the female, and the female the male."

Thank you for your patience in listening to me—there is no way in which this story can be told—except in stories, parables; but perhaps my discourse will enable you—and I, ashamed by my inability to tell of such matters in academic terms, I shall try harder to live them—will enable you to see the importance of the tales, and how they have always been clamoring to help us in our daily life.

With that, the poet sat down. For a moment, there was silence. Then the gallery, largely filled with the women students' caucus, began to applaud. The front rows of professors, assistant professors, and associate professors craned to see who was applauding, but then the Chairman of English, who happened to be a lady, and also the immediate sponsor of the poet's visit, began to clap, and the whole hall followed suit. "Our visitor will now be happy to answer questions . . ." began the chairman as the applause died down, but the poet blushed and waved the questions away, crossed to where his girl friend was sitting, and took her hand.

However, that night, the poet's dreams were full of madwomen and blood, and bacchantes gralloching poets who had run naked through the trees. He was caught, and felt the black-bladed knife press on his skin, and gave himself up for lost—but as soon as he had done so he was taken through the wood to a great throne made of white wood that turned slowly, and on that throne were three queens, and the throne was carved very curiously with fruiting vines, and apple trees, and beast faces that looked through the apple-trees, all long-lipped and hairy-eared, with alert sideways eyes. The bacchantes forced him to his knees, and thrust a knife next to his shoulder-blade, and whispered "apologize, apologize" but he

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would not apologize and called out instead, "I have seen what I have seen." A great beefy woman in a leather kilt, her large breasts bare, stood in front of him then, obscuring his view of the throne. She took hold of him by the neck and bent him backwards over her knee, and he could feel his spine crackling. But then, as it burst, he felt a strange turn of consciousness. The nape of his neck which was pressed to the lady wrestler's kneecap now gave him the sensation of nuzzling that kneecap, and a mouth opened there and a tongue came out and he licked the lady's knee. Then his eyes opened in his hair scalp and he could see her great thigh. His legs which were bent backwards began to work again, and he moved them as he felt himself lifted up in the air and placed on the throne with the three ladies. A little blood came from his muzzle, he licked it away with a great tongue. All his senses were incredibly sharp except for his eyes which were blurred, and he flapped hairy lids over them until they grew clearer. Then, with a sudden change of feeling, he found how to see through his sense of smell, how to see through his nostrils, and he turned his head towards the white lady to the right of him and she was all colours, but when he turned to his right there was a partition of the throne, though this also glowed with rainbow colours. Then he knocked at the partition, and the white-black cabin door opened, and the lady who answered it was dark-haired and naked. She had a little wound in the top of her abdomen just below her rib-cage on the right, and she spread it with her fingers and said, look, I have lost my anger, and, are your eyes closed, do you not remember me? As he worried who she might be, the cabin dwindled and whirled and turned into some vague lights and a sensation that he was rubbing his eyes, which he found he was, in bed, and the tinny light of dawn was seeping through the curtains. He sniffed, there was something unusual here, his touch of the "Old American," the autumn catarrh had left him, but as he sniffed again he felt a strange warmth and colour come into his head from the bed where he was lying, and he could smell the metal of the lamp by the bed, and the wood in the impatiently-carved little sideboard with vines and false drawers that stood in the corner. He dressed in an ecstasy of fresh perception, he took a clean shirt from the cellophane wrapper and revelled in the smell of soap and ironing and believed he could see the black skin and worried eyes of the woman who had ironed the shirt. His shoes gave him a brandy made of all the miles he had walked in them; a simultaneous mem-

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ory like a standing wave in which he could see all that past at one glimpse; his great coat was new, and its fleece smelt of machinery and America. He opened the door and the sun rising smelt of all the countries and people it had travelled since the first time the earth appeared in the sky, and he realized he had been standing in the open door knowing and experiencing the bloody history of the world and the glad history of the world for many hours, for the sun was now at zenith. He turned and ran back into the house, looking into drawers for cotton, wool, and each piece of furniture he looked in smelt of the forest in which it had grown and of the machinery that had felled it and of the men who drove that machinery. He found the wool and pressed it to his nose, intending to make plugs that would cut down the glare of experience a little, but he could smell the great warehouse the wool had been stored in for several years, he smelt its inventory and its size. With an inspiration he took a candle from its stand and broke off a lump of wax and warmed it in his fingers and made a plug of it, but the wax was so ancient and came from so deep in the earth so long ago that he felt suffocated by the layers of rock and dead forests. In his pocket he found a muffler that had a friendly smell to it, and he wrapped this round his face, and the friendly smell of sheep that lived together in their field of grass and wanted nothing more, came to him, and this was not too much. In time, he thought, as he left the house walking towards the woods whose past he had always conjectured, where the Indian burial ground had been, (and the great chiefs were still there to his senses, in the air that filtered through his scarf) I can loosen this cloth on my face, and come into my own. I believe I shall not be like the last man on earth, with every shop open to him and every place to visit, but lonely; for these smells are so loud and alive that I shall have to find a new word—"smell" is too undetailed—for them, and they are surely persons, with whom I shall learn to converse, and until then I shall be like a child at a party, or like a child at school, or like one in the presence of the adults of time.

His girlfriend was not due to arrive until that evening, and he had wondered whether he would by then be able to match her life of smell as they joined together.

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The squad-car sidled to a halt/screeched to a standstill, with the effect of a pounce/beside the walking figure in the highheeled shoes and the macintosh. The policeman/the electric mechanism/rolled

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the left hand/right hand window down, and the peaked cap/bare tousled head/of the policeman poked out. "Excuse me, madam/say, lady," he said politely/brusquely, "might I ask why you are out on the streets so late at night?/ you're crazy to be out on the streets this late/ we're sure there's no trouble but we like to keep our eyes open/ Jeeze, there was a rape and a mugging four blocks away this time last week." The blue-clad/tan-clad/officer/cop opened the door and stepped out of/levered himself out of/ the squad car. "I wonder whether you would show me what you have in your case/ Open the case." "There's nothing in the case, Officer, but I do need your help." "Just open it, please, Madam/ I'll jest take a look." And both officers take the suitcase quite gently from the lady in the high heels and the macintosh, and, muttering surprise at its lightness, lay it down on the pavement/sidewalk. It is locked. "Might I have the key, Madam?/ I said, open it." "But officer," she said to the four policeman, for the driver had now stepped out of/ levered himself through / the right hand / left hand door, "I told you there was nothing inside." "We'll be the judge of that," said all four officers simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, two at six o'clock in the morning, and two at one o'clock the same morning. "Just open the case." "Well, actually, there is something in it," said the lady, "Indeed / Yeah?" said the interviewing officer icily / resignedly. "I have my transport in this case." "Just open the case." Inside the case were layers and layers of green and white crepe paper arranged in wavy bandages around a superb model of an ocean liner complete in every detail, and done in some very light hard metal. The officer picked it up with admiration / admiration and as he did so a snatch of music came from it. "Have you a license for this transistor, Madam / Very, *very* cute, my kid'd love this. Did you make it"/ looking coldly ahead / turning to the driver. "No license is required, officer / Yes, I made it / It is my soul." At this time the four policemen looked closely at the woman, they had noticed from the first that her dress, if she wore any, was too short and did not show under the hem of her macintosh / rain-proof topcoat. They had put her down for some raver / hophead trotting home after a party, and it was quite likely that her clothes and whatever she doped were in that case. "Officer, I need your help. Will you give me your advice?" She parted her raincoat. "This wound on my side, do you think it is dangerous, do you think I should find a hospital? It stopped bleeding on the ship, and only pained me at first. Is there a

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doctor who would see me?" A noise like the sea and the throbbing of engines filled the street, and they saw the woman naked under her coat smiling and holding her wound open through a mist. They felt for / their truncheons / loosened their revolvers, and there was a shuddering underground as though a small earthquake passed under their foot, but the street was empty and the pavement-sidewalk unoccupied except for themselves and a few small strips of crepe paper soaked with water. The interviewing officer prodded at these with his boot / delicately lifted a strip with the barrel of his revolver, touched it with a finger which he put to his lips. "!!!!!!!!! !!!! / I want to get this analyzed, but I'd rather not report. O.K.?" The policemen got huffily into their black car/casually into their tan-and-white car / and accelerated away with their headlights blazing as if to search the empty street and light it like day.

*

"Did you not ask for this blood sisterhood? Is the Moon not a door? You come to me with your hair set tight in a bun, your chin in a scowl, your face's skin looking harsh as pale emery. Why, S," I say, "have you come looking at me like that, so disapprovingly?" "You are rotten to women." "But I, I never knew you." "That's what I mean."

The pile of scree shifts a little further down, the ghost impends in the tip of my pen's nib, the ink has grown silvery, the paper rough as emery. "Why, S, who is that large red man you have brought with you, who stands as though introducing you, and apologizing for what you did." "It was a cry to him! It is my Red Man. He should have been my spirit guide in life, now we are in this place together, where you sit bolt upright in bed frightened of me only because I am no longer flesh and blood. We have to stay here until I can understand what you did, and you can understand me. And the Red Man has been truly dead, but now he aches to return to the dead, and I hope to see those happy lands again, and to wear the face I wore before my parents met."

The Indian burial grounds where the chiefs and braves dust away like pollen. Or like pemmican in the beaks of birds. It is air-burial, the dead people in their regalia are placed on wooden platforms to evaporate and leave nothing behind, not even bones. They are very holy places, since they are where the ancestors have their being in the great time, which is where there is no time. Time started when

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we were born, held up to our mother's ears like a "fat gold watch," and ends when we die, praises be. To take the watch out of the wound is to live and be in time, but not of it.

The great Chiefs are relaxed and their pleasure is to do as the birds do, or the tiny crawling lice, or those that build the great pockets of silvery gossamer in the trees, the communal moths who spin and net their homes with mouths that do not ache with lying. The Chiefs are air-fisherman who use their whole selves as baits to catch a fresh life in death, who make themselves a playground for the rich children of nature, they are busy perfecting themselves in these high plazas, these hammocks, busy preparing guidance for English spiritualists. The first officer of the great black-on-white liner *SS Messenger* leant out over the misty sea. The ship was proceeding at full speed since no sea-traffic was reported and none showed on the radar-scope. He was very surprised to see the glaring eyes of a great bird and its outstretched wings appear in the mist at the sea-surface, gliding along, it was unlike any sea-bird he had ever seen, then he saw that it was the figure-head on the prow of a great war-canoe that was being paddled along faster than the liner could go by a row of red Indians in full feather headdress who gravely saluted him as they overtook the ship. "How!" Later the first officer told the ship's doctor, who said he had seen much stranger things at sea. Perhaps, he thought, they were a consignment of Indian guides proceeding to the English Spiritualist churches for their assignments. The first officer guffawed, palely. But the ship's doctor said: "You mustn't mock. I am a spiritualist myself. Though that's no reason not to mock. I'm going to tell you something now that I've never told anybody else outside my church. Every evening at six o'clock regularly, ship's time, I talk to my dead wife. She tells me all that has been going on in the spirit world, and I tell her what has been happening down here. She was particularly interested, shocked even out of her customary calm (dead people are often very calm, it seems so to us, at any rate) when I told her about our murder. The thing that surprised her was that there were none of the usual spirit-helpers around, that is, people recently-dead who have taken to the spirit world very intelligently—some people will not believe they are dead when they arrive on the Other Side—and are therefore very good at guidance and counsel when younger spirits arrive. Moreover, though the dead were expecting a young soul to emerge, probably in consider-

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able distress from the murdered body, in fact no soul emerged from the body, and for all they know is there still. This, they said, was very unusual. If a soul remains in the body, they said, for a long time after death, it means either that the soul has been trapped by a very bad karma indeed and is compelled to watch in microscopic detail the disintegration of their earthly habitations; or that the person is a very great soul indeed, who needs this knowledge of matter for some great work. However, to return to your vision, you can see why I am not as surprised as you are, and in fact I would have been very delighted to see such a vision. Beautiful in itself, all done according to the old ways, and auguring well for our country, since the Indian wisdom was precisely directed to survive the death-trauma with intelligence and memory quite intact, so that they could assist others to cross and recross this threshold (as we must) without fear and without forgetting what we have learned in our lives, so that we can bring it to the other world, and receive their knowledge in this. This is why the Red Indian so often becomes a spirit-medium's guide and friend—in that profession you need somebody strong—and that is why they were paddling with superhuman speed over the ocean with the full cooperation of the powers of wind and weather, mediated to them by their guide, a picture of the air's spirit, the great thunderbird, at their prow."

So the great red Indian chiefs make themselves intelligible phantoms, enlarging themselves by entering into the small things. We watched a small spider, beady-red, glossy, hunting among the enormous stone built into slabs on the river's bridge's parapet. It careened over the pocked stone as though there were a castorwheel at the tip of each glossy leg, as it were a dining-trolley racing between shell-holes; some grim grey-masked aphid hugged the grey stone tight and our spider collided into it, recoiled from its grimy waxes and joyless stare, and careened away. They practice speaking with their mouthpieces, by the scraping together of horny legs or horny lips until they know the language, until they can speak by the scraping together of the edges of dust, the fractured glass of dust vibrated by the sun's rays. I have scraped a dead Indian from under my nail, in the daylight he looked like a grey smear on a tissue, and I had no idea he would come to me at night, red man of poor S, and rescue me from her disapproval by kind and powerful suggestions.

But then a new voice broke in. "Are you still here, Chief Look-

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ing-Glass? And S, why, you look so drab and cross! Are you still angry? Look, I have given away my anger, my devilish gall. My lover thought me too cross, and gave me this wound, which released me. You must accept your wound, S, your blood-sisterhood. Allow your soul to travel like a moon, until it learns moonthings, and the shedding of blood is no longer a curse, but a joy, as it is for me. I can shed blood whenever I please, come, Red Chief, taste of my blood (he falls to his knees and puts his lips to the girl's wound). Come S, find your release in this sweet action."

"Madam," says the ship's doctor, "why do you appear to us in this form? As a murdered person, bleeding to death from internal hemmorhage and a missing gall-bladder, wounded in the liver as Prometheus was, his fiery anger feeding on him in the likeness of an eagle, you have given your anger away, and no doubt it destroys the villain robber elsewhere. The grotesquery (if I may with deferential usage and humbleness employ the expression) of this avatar, the murdered woman with time ticking in her blood, naked, wounded, defenseless, this recalls the religion we have had for so long, which frightens us and comforts few. Why do you have to appear in a manner which quotes at all from Him, can you not come in your own triumphal Car?" "Dear Doctor, your ship is my Car. It is your species' last chance; I am working through these forms but they are so encrusted with your own defenses. Your shows and your lust for power and control, your vulgar nipping cocktails, your bar mirrors and ballroom dancing, your lotteries and ship's games on the promenade deck: I can break out in whatever forms may be strange enough to pierce your defenses, your defenses which soon make grotesquery of my mysteries. I take a scrap here and a scrap there, a face from poor S, and a hue from the Red Indian, a dish from the grill-room on the quarter-deck, the sensations of a sunbather; pressing on your ways with my being, until perhaps the whole rotten and silly facade will break away and you will enter your birthright. But you have learned so many ways to turn away from me, so many amusing games to close in my face like gates of fantastic wrought iron. You may lose me even after this voyage. You have tried to lose me ever since I was with Jesus in the desert, and he chose not to turn my stones into bread, even though there could be food on this earth for all my children. This earth, if you knew me, you could not pollute with the waste of your industries and wars: your defense programme. I was with Jesus in the resur-

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rection garden, when he told me not to touch him. It was his defense programme, since touch is one of my great gifts, touch and the thinking skin. I was the horned Devil; it was part of your defense programme to clap the horns of my womb on the head of a devil, and to say that we all came from the great father in the sky, and had been found under gooseberry bushes. Whose is that little cottage in the woods, behind the thicket of wild gooseberry bushes? Where is God, Chief Looking-Glass?" (The Chief points seriously at the mountains, then at the sun. He stoops, and, cupping his hands, dedicates water from the lake first to the Lady's belly, then to the sun. He offers the water to the Lady, who smilingly drinks it). "The horns of sweet generation were fastened above my countenance, and its complexion was darkened with the fierce blood of my womb: it was the defense programme. I was the hell of red flames burning men who had shed the blood of other men instead of honouring mine; that fire is the fruitful lust which blood arouses, and which can only be assuaged by loving me as I bleed. I am the Prince of Darkness: it is your darkness and you cannot see that I am the Princess in it. You reflect me everywhere in your defenses: you film me lovingly as Count Dracula, and your blows to my speaking mouth have put the blood up there, the curving moon-teeth there, white in the gore, and I have three white wives. I have been the dead men of the quest in the spy movies of your defense programme: I have stared at you from the third bullet-eye shot between the brows of the great villain. You will not look through this eye, and yet you yearn for it, it is my pine-thyrsis, my pine-al, the stone over the well within which the dead people who are the secretaries of the long memory, the white wake of spaceship earth, rise and descend . . . Now I am this Ship, and I appear to the voyagers in matter and time as they have capacity to see me, as they have the desire to see me. For most of you it is as a harmless murdered woman, a figment from a detective story, safely dead . . ." "You come from inward, then, as much as from outside us?" asks the ship's doctor. "I am your deepest self." "Do the dead truly live?" "Yes, in you. Earth looks with earth at earth, earth on earth speaks to earth, earth walks on earth among earth . . ." The Lady now sings:

> "Erth owt of erth is wonderly wrought,
> Erth hath goten upon erth a dygnite of nowght,
> Erth upon erth hath set all his thowt,
> How that erth upon erth myght be hye brought.

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Erth upon erth wold be a kyng,
But how that erth shall to erth, he thynkith no thyng;
When erth biddith erth his rentes home bryng,
Then shall erth for erth have a hard partyng.

Erth upon erth wynneth castlles and towres,
Then seyth erth unto erth: "This is all owres;"
But when erth upon erth hath bilded his bowres,
Than shall erth for erth suffre hard showres.

Erth upon erth hath welth upon molde,
Erth goth upon erth glydryng all in golde,
Like as he unto erth neuer torn shuld;
and yet shal erth unto erth sooner than he wold."

*

The goddesses of the corn-patch on the road behind the last of the campus buildings were three stooks of corn-fronds. The corn-cobs had been harvested and the earth made bare, relieved of its fruit, put to rest for the winter. It would not do, though, to leave it unattended and without tribute. Accordingly, some of the fronds of the corn-plants had been swathed together, to make three standing green stooks, and positioned in a random but powerful manner on the small field. This corn patch was near, but did not belong to, a small white-painted house of clapboard, in whose porch an apparatus of glass chimes sung day and night in the breeze.

It was the custom of the farmers to pile up these corn goddesses in each harvested field, to remind the earth of its fertility during the long winter of snow. Red pumpkins were placed at the feet of the teepee-like structures in preparation for Halloween, or Samhain, the end of the summer, Harvest Festival, feast of the Dead that rest and are consumed in the form of the earth's fruits.

The Professor never passed these goddesses without removing his hat in respect. On one of his walks after class he was mildly surprised to see a figure approaching him that also removed its hat as it neared the corn-patch. As it got closer, the Professor saw that it was the Poet. As they passed on the road they courteously waggled eyebrows at each other, but did not speak. Each realized that it was too late for easy conversation now, as they had already travelled two-and-a-half thousand miles on the same boat without exchanging a word.

The goddesses had great strength and presence in the little field, and their leaves at first remained plump and green. As they grew

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yellower and withered against each other in the colder weather it was as though they sung a diminishing but still audible song while their colour grew less contrasted with the brown earth. On October 20th the first snow fell to settle for a few hours. The white-thatched teepees huddled down in the field: the snow was light and the earth still warm, so they were picked out by the snow which the earth melted but they did not, like tents of paper or motionless ghosts in the field. After the winter snows had laid heavily upon them, then spring revealed their darkened traces, like the few charred sticks of a bonfire. They retained their worshipful feeling, like objects of an open-air church, which they hallowed, as if the corn-spirit itself had directed that they be left there by means of some indescribably holy scripture that opened and closed in men's and women's minds as the seasons changed, and caused them to leave signs and souvenirs of the departed presences, whose return was always expected and hoped for, and never failed.

*

The old psychologist with the great freckles on his face was dancing with a famous ballerina, they were dancing the paso doble on one of the first class dance floors. Suddenly there was an enormous hooting from above their heads which made them clap their hands to their ears. Then an urgent voice came hallooing from the loudspeaker "Man Overboard!, Man Overboard," followed by a brusque request to the passengers not to rush out on the deck, since that would impede the rescue operations. They stopped dancing and sat watching outward through the lounge windows. A waiter stepped forward and asked them whether they would like a drink: both asked for a juice, which shortly arrived, elaborately garnished with fruit slices and jingling with ice. A maroon rose tracer-like over the sea and burst with a bright light and a shower of sparks. The ship's whistle had long ceased blowing; they heard the pounding of feet along the deck as the crew ran for its rescue stations. They imagined that one set of crew would be scanning every inch of the night sea with binoculars for some glimpse of white, a face or a shirt, that would enable them to lower a boat in that direction. The ship's screws had reversed, there was a terrible straining throughout the fabric of the ship—the *SS Messenger* at that moment seemed no more substantial than some nailed-together garden-shed in a high wind, since creaking moved like dream-speech along every corner and cranny wherever the fabric of it fastened together. They

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saw through their window one of the great lifeboats lowering past, slowly and smoothly. The ship was now totally still, the engines silent, and all the noises outside noises; they felt cut off from this activity in which they could play no part, for they had been informed that the crew were fully-trained and passengers would only get in the way. Gone was the jovial and playful pretence of a passenger merely being crew living in a different part of the ship and dressed differently for fun; there were now two sets of people, one who knew their trade, and one who were cargo and freight, that should be tightly lashed down so that it would not shift in an emergency. The old psychologist sitting with the ballerina watched the life-boat sliding past their window. Look! she said and pointed to a window further along the lounge. Past this window also a lifeboat slid as it was lowered, past every window the white lifeboats slid against the dark.

Lowering so many lifeboats meant that the search was now desperate, and nothing had been glimpsed, so that the dark sea would have to be quartered. They decided to go along to the aft lounge which was nearest the stern of the ship to see whether the events were clearer down there. Other people had the same idea, a great many passengers had gathered in the little red lounge to look out over the "blunt end" of the ship, where a great deal of crew activity was in progress. The most striking change was that the great boiling wake of the ship had gone, for the screws were not turning. Now they felt absolutely surrounded by the ocean, there was no mark of their road here, and consequently of their road back, they were with their camerados on a luxurious raft, crowded and dependent on each other. A pulley had been erected over the stern, and a man was being lowered into the still waters over the screw. Saltways had seen a picture of the *Messenger's* screws once, they were the size of the west end of a cathedral, the little man photographed touching the still blades could have as it were processed spirally to the screw's centre as though he were burrowing into church, and the church towered above him. They looked like the great west window of Salisbury Cathedral, the tallest church in England. The ballerina imagined the little man lowered past these enormous murky blades, like one exploring with his lantern *la cathédrale engloutie,* and she paced out a few steps on the red carpet.

They went back to their table in the first-class lounge. The windows were now vacant and dark with night. Occasionally the finger of a searchlight swept out on to the waves. The waiter came for-

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ward again and asked whether they would like something more. "Would you like some hot chocolate?" he said to his companion. They agreed that it was time for their chocolate. It arrived on snowy napkins in thin glasses held by twining silver frameworks. The man seemed preoccupied as he served them. He topped up their dark foamy glasses from a thick jug, and a few drops of chocolate fell on the snowy cloth. He apologized, and made a few quick ineffectual gestures of wiping up, merely smearing the wet black stains, quite unlike the usual style of a waiter in the first class areas. The psychologist saw that he was frightened, and probably the only waiter left on duty now that all the rescue stations were manned, and he decided to seize his chance. "Was that your friend who went overboard?" he said suddenly and sharply. He had no knowledge of the waiter's friends, and indeed did not remember seeing the waiter before that evening, but experience had taught him that a swift question that assumes knowledge is a way to secrets. "Mmmmmy friend, Sir, no, it was the murderer . . ." "What murderer?" snapped the older man. "I'm sorry, Sir," said the waiter, and walked quickly away.

For the first time since the serious illness he had had in his thirties, the psychologist waiting for sleep in his first-class cabin (as big as a good hotel-room, and with no trace of seafaring in its appointments), felt like a child put to bed among the goings-on of some adult emergency. The footsteps and the hurryings went on through the night, and there were block-and-tackle noises and the searchlight still going when he woke up at dawn. When the steward brought his tea the sun was well up. The ships engines had resumed their accustomed note, their throbbing like the sound within one's body of life. Without the engines, the ship had seemed like a mere shell, a floating mausoleum dedicated to corpses and funerary matters, a floating city of the dead. Now the living people were once more in procession across the waves in the jovial ship, all flags flying. "Did they make a rescue?" he asked the steward as he rearranged his pillows to help him sit up for his tea. "No, Sir, nothing was found," said the steward sombrely—but he was always sombre, this meant nothing, but merely suited first-class occasions. "I suppose they have checked the passenger list?" "Yes, Sir, I understand it was a young man in the tourist class. Very sad." "Indeed, I suppose the relatives will be informed by radio . . ." then he stopped suddenly. He had remembered a dream he had had during the uneasy small hours of last night. The ship had been full of hurry-

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ing footsteps, but no people were visible. He wandered among these invisible crowds until he came within sight of the stern of the ship. The black sea stretched behind them, and there was no wake, the engines had been stopped. On the aft deck where the tennis was played, he saw on the clear space two people embracing, a man and a woman. They broke off their embrace, they seemed happy, but it was as at a temporary parting. The man walked to the stern rail, and the woman waved to him as he vaulted over into the black water. As soon as he touched the surface it closed over his head and he disappeared. Suddenly the band struck up in the ballroom, and the engines started again, and the owners of all the footsteps winked into view, everybody was carrying masks, as at a fancy-dress ball. Once more the great wake stretched out from the ship's end, white and coiling. The ship itself seemed to slip away from the dreamer, leaving him suspended over the creamy wake which coiled away over the smooth water and slowly faded, as if drawn away down below the waves. And then he was below the waves, and the body of the drowned man, whole and entire, had increased enormously as though it could fill the whole sea. With closed eyes the dead man was hauling on a long creamy cord, which the dreamer recognized as the wake of the vessel, and as he hauled he grew smaller, and drew himself with the aid of the cord towards the shore. The dreamer knew that he would eventually haul himself to land, and break the water and walk out on to some beach, but whether it were a beach on the new world or the old, the dreamer could not tell, but he knew he would then be a living man again, and able to take up his life once more, though now he would understand his kinship with the sea, from which all life has come.

The little psychologist got up out of bed and went over to the dressing table mirror. He wanted to write his dream down, as he always did, while it was fresh, because he knew that although it was rarely possible to interpret one's own dreams satisfactorily, the dream remembered would nevertheless affect conduct during the day. He would offer it to a patient for analysis, to help equalize the treatment, democratize it.

He wrote the dream down. How deep it went and how far his understanding could go with it he could not tell. What was immediately apparent was that it called to his first work and preoccupation in science. He had wished to render the baby conscious in the womb, or the neonate conscious of its former life. As a young man, he had dabbled in spiritualism, and he had become aware of

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the great semi-permeable barrier between life and death, through which came such strange echoes; which distorted, or seemed to distort, the forces that attempted to penetrate it. He worried about the death-trauma, which seemed as absolute an amnesia as the birth-trauma. But babies were born alive, otherwise we should not be here, their hearts were beating and their healing and growing powers were intact, and these seemed to him like the healing and growing powers that had formed the baby in the womb. So some definite knowledge survived the birth trauma, but nothing suitable for the laboratory seemed to survive the death trauma. So he turned his attention to the former. After all, the material of the dead people went into the great womb of nature, just as the drowned man (very likely minced into pieces by the enormous torque of the cathedral-sized propulsion screws, wrenched into pieces before he could take his first lungful of water by the power that drove them from the old world to the new) was even now dissolving in the sea. Had his molecules been able to speak, some newborn child could have given news of his travels from those parts of him that had reached a new world through the clouds and the rain and the plants and the salads that the pregnant mother insisted on eating, probably because the dead man called to her from the leaf, "Come, it is time to see again and to touch and smell again, give me life." So when Saltways became middle-aged, and a psychologist, he had studied all the evidence he could find for recollection in the womb; he would study the dead not as they left this world, but as they entered it. He listened to patients under hypnotism or drugs describing the circumstances of their own birth, recalling sights and sounds as they came into the brilliant clashing world and experienced for the first time since (on this hypothesis) their last deaths; light and the breathing of air. Even further back, floating in a void and watching the stars, watching the great pulsation from a red sun of warm radiation, waiting for an event like falling into the screws of a liner, the spiral passage down the womb. And earlier still, but these were more difficult, memories of animal life, or fantasies of them, of running like a horse, of gliding like a snake among the feet of wise persons who conversed beyond the grave. And once upon a time in this timeless land where past and future seemed mixed and all knowledge and experience seemed possible, in this place the memories of which, the psychologist began to see, *were* what living men called the Unconscious, a dead person spoke through a patient's mouth.

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This patient spoke as a young woman who was to be a poet in the future, and die by her own hand. She spoke of the future as though it were the past. She wandered unhappily through the only objects and events she could remember, predict: her miserable life as a prodigy, and her poetry. The psychologist had been able to write down some of the verses his patient mumbled, heard through the coiling recollections and hypnotic fevers of memory, but could not persuade that patient that *he* was the poet, nor to acknowledge these verses as his own. Then one day many years later the old man with the freckles of age read in the Sunday newspaper a tribute to a woman poet who had just killed herself, and read there the very same verses that he had taken down from his patient wandering through the unborn state, the Bardo, before that unhappy young woman had been born. The notes were properly dated and in situ with the rest of the case history. But case-histories were confidential, and the mediumistic patient still alive, so the satisfaction of proof came to him privately.

His experiments went on. He was able to join a clinic in which the mothers had agreed to don a light steel framework that fitted around their bodies and plugged into a reversed vacuum-cleaner motor, so that when the motor was turned on, the air-pressure around their bellies, and thus the air-pressure on the babies growing within them, was reduced. The theory was that this uncollapsed certain blood-vessels in the foetus, so that growing points in the nervous system could be more richly supplied with blood. When the babies were born, they spoke sooner than other children, and showed in their infancies great talents for symbolic expression, in mathematics and the arts. He supposed this showed that they had experienced less damage, through more consciousness of, the birth-trauma; indeed he had visions of these prodigious babies waiting for the right moment and plunging between the contracting fibres and waves of labour so that they emerged like skillful swimmers through rapids, or like a man negotiating the vortices of the screw of an ocean liner.

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It was perhaps a fifteen minutes drive and a further twenty-minutes' walk through the woods from the Glass Cottage to one of the notable beauty spots of Cornwall; St. Nectan's Glen and Kieve, or cauldron. A kieve is a circular pot fashioned by water in rock

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from the endless scouring around of stones, small boulders, branches, and other inclusions brought down in the waterfall. Such cauldrons may be any depth, depending on the circumstances, though it is usual for them to be quite shallow, a couple of feet or so. In Tintagel's rocky valley, which is not far away from St. Nectan's, there are many charming kieves in the little waterfalls, a few feet in depth, always boiling white, a few feet across. In due time, which due time is measured by tens of thousands of years, the outer wall of the pot may scour away, rubbed by the water, and the kieve becomes a deep bevelled cleft in the fall. It is usual then for another cavity in the rock to be formed by years of turbulence and the circulation of fragments, out of which the water boils in its motion, and a second kieve is formed. There may be series of these shelves in the fall to be seen, but usually only one kieve at a time in a fall, since the water must fall directly down to make such an impact on the stone.

The kieves in the Rocky Valley may have been charming; charming was the wrong word for St. Nectan's kieve. The fall itself was perhaps sixty feet high, and fell directly into a perfectly round cauldron which overflowed across flat sheets of rock into the stream running through the woods. These woods were reputedly haunted by three grey ladies. It was claimed that the cauldron itself was some twenty feet deep or more, and the roar of the water had a bass note that suggested depth, echoing round the rocky defile of the cliff through which the water fell. At the head of the cliff was a small dwelling-place with a few tables and chairs on a rough terrace where visitors could refresh themselves. In fact the kieve seemed to be owned by the people here, since there was a wooden door marked "Waterfall" which had to be unlocked, and a fee paid to them. The small brochure they had printed spoke of the fall's height and the cauldron's depth, how the sound never stopped since the wood was sheltered and the winters warm, and how their house was built on the site of St. Nectan's Hermitage where the Cornish Saint had lived and prayed and healed long before modern England existed, long before the Normans came. There were a few sentences telling of a legend that St. Arthur's Knights were baptized in St. Nectan's glen. The fall stood like a full white tree of sound among green mosses.

The proprietor of the Hermitage tea-shop unlocked the peeling door to the waterfall, and cautioned them to mind the steps,

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which were worn (as by the procession of countless pilgrims) and damp with the air of the glen. They picked their way down carefully, awed as always by the atmosphere of the great beeches that sprung from side to side of the path. The beeches seemed to form eyes and noses in their barks, grimacing expressions of gods and animals. The man's and woman's vision was sharpened by the talk of ghosts, by the physical awesomeness of what they had come to see. They wished to experience it to the full extent of their powers. They did not refuse any vision, even Disney faces in the trees. The path wound down and they came to the sheets of rock between which the stream fast-flowed, and they passed through a thicket of shrubbery. The sound became more and more urgent, and the sight of the fall, thick, bounding white into its basin like the bounty of a white sun falling on its planet, like the white fecundation of a god finding its great vase, stopped them in their tracks. "May I photograph it?" he whispered, "I want to use the flash." Taking pictures of the Falls was known to be difficult, there was such glaring whiteness about the turbulent water in the dusky defile that luck must be on the side of the photographer as well as skill. Eleven o'clock in the morning in summertime was known to be the best time, because then a shaft of sunlight fell slantwise on the white energy of the kieve's surface, and the standard post-card picture had been taken at that time. They wanted good pictures for themselves, but it was early autumn, and teatime.

By crossing the stream and standing on the flat rock platform in two inches of water it was possible to point the camera directly up the white spinning shaft of the fall, and to see clearly the twin spouts of water that jetted over the lip of the pot and which crossed over each other like a nerve chiasma or crossed breast-bands before they reached the racking stream below. The drawback to this shot was that the spray splashed the camera lens and blurred the picture even during the short time that it took to adjust the viewfinder. One could snatch shots, and this is what he did, using this time a flash, in the hope of bringing up contrasts on the speeding water. The other shot he needed was of the precise way in which the water entered the kieve. For this he would have to climb up a dwindling pathway that led through the shrubbery on the other side of the fall, to a small ledge. Here, by stretching forward on his belly, he could reach over far enough, he thought, to find his view. "Please take care," his companion said. "You mean where the face

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floats?" for in the postcard at this point some glare in the leaves and the water had made a fierce bewhiskered face that grinned out of the picture. He climbed without difficulty, though he got his trousers smeared with the fern-mould. Once at the ledge, he saw that his scheme was sound, and he stretched out and leant with the camera, put his eye to it, and found that the impact of the falling column on its own substance would make the picture he needed. From this angle, the water in the pot was keeling round and round in a massive way, with its whole volume, but there was a further structure of more lightly etched vortices on the bubbling surface. He thought that the whole system moved clock-wise in the basin. He would like a movie camera to make sure of this, but the noise was a bit confusing and there were other motions in the water, one a kind of crosswise tucking in of the surface at one point, which would make the motion, perhaps after one rebound from the insides of the pot, helical. He thought that he could detect a twice-round feeling in the motion of the water, as though it coiled within itself a number of times before falling out in the crossed bands over the lip. He had a fancy that it coiled in this manner once, twice, thrice, and then half round and over, but he could not be sure. A cry from below cutting across the hum of the fall warned him that he had been leaning too far over, and he drew back, waving genially at the woman below. There was a smaller ledge which would give him a better view, and it would be best to crawl on to this rather than to step across, since it was a very small edge, and a little rounded at the edge. The camera round his neck safely on its strap, he inched forward, but something seemed to catch and tug at his ankle and with a cry that the water's sound quenched, he was over the slippery ledge and headfirst into the kieve.

The woman noticed that the rock face was suddenly empty. Her attention had been away from his antics on these invisible ledges, for she had promised herself that she would try not to care. The ledge was empty. Was he on his way down through the shrubbery? She ran toward it, but realized that the path was quite empty. Could he have fallen—fallen into that white torment among the rocks scouring round and round—what could she do—splashing in the stream she ran towards the white bands that she expected to run red at any moment. The water's note seemed to her to have changed to a ruminative sound, like an animal that is digesting. It was all unreal to her, she could not realize that he had fallen and

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was now at this moment struggling among the white currents of St. Nectan's Kieve. Suddenly a glistening thing like a seal flopped over the lip of the pot and fell sprawling in the shallow racing pool there. She saw blood on his scalp and his nose, he was very white, but he was breathing. She pulled at his clothes but could not shift him, and knelt instead in the water to cradle his head and keep his mouth in the air. His eyelids flickered and his eyes opened. To her surprise they smiled, and looked to her kinder than ever before, when he spoke he spoke smiling, though blood was running down over his eye. "Dearest, I have been on a long journey, though I'm afraid I have brought back no pictures of where I have been to show you," he touched the wrenched-off top of the camera which still dangled round his neck by the strap. "Here, let me . . . can you crawl a bit out of this water?" They were both completely drenched, "I don't want your head falling back into St. Nectan's water, so if you get on to the bank I'll go and get help."

Not much later they were sitting by the fire at the hermitage, drinking sweet tea and wrapped in blankets. The people there were very kind and concerned: never during the eighteen years they had been there had such a thing happened, though there were tales of bones rolling round and round in the kieve until they were small as dice, and they say that a clergyman once tried to swim St. Nectan's Kieve in the eighteen-eighties but emerged in pieces, and they never found the head. The couple could not themselves ring for a car, since there was no phone, but the proprietress ran to a nearby farmer that she said would be glad to drive them down the cattle lane to their car parked at the edge of the main road. At home in the Glass Cottage she said to him, "Did you see bones dancing in St. Nectan's Cauldron?" "No," he said, "I saw a great liner sailing over the ocean. The portholes were human faces. They launched a little boat for me, and gave me a berth. When the liner reached the shore the black and white of it broke up into a great concourse of people, black and white and red, who went their various ways into the land. I had to vault over a little stone fence, and it was then that I hurt myself." The grazes, for they were no more, were his only injury. "You must have been very near death, and so was I, for I could not have gone on living if you had died so suddenly and cruelly." "I was very near something, but it didn't feel like death." And he looked at her with that very kind expression which was new to him since he had traversed the Kieve.

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In mid-Atlantic we ran into an electrical storm. One of the officers was making an informal patrol of the promenade deck when he saw a curious appearance about a lifeboat stanchion. Corrosion, perhaps, he would have a rating paint it. As he got closer he saw that it was as though bright flecks were speeding through a blue sheath that wrapped the bracket round, and flowing into the deck. The sheath was a pale blue colour, almost invisible in the early sunlight, like a butane flame, and the flecks were many colours, gold, silver, crimson, turquoise. Unwisely the young officer reached out to touch the phenomenon. There was a loud explosion and he was thrown sprawling, narrowly missing a steel bollard with his head.

Up in the bridge the second officer was making his inspection. In this modern vessel there was still a wheel that nominally controlled the rudder, and a rating now was taking his turn at it. But the wheel controlled the ship within quite narrow limits; when any momentous change of direction was required the great black panel with its winking lights and white dials supervised the alteration of course by computer, taking into account tides, winds, temperature, and other variables before setting the course exactly. Despite this, the wheel still had in it the feel of the ship, and the steering-shafts penetrated through the vessel right down to the stern keel, where the rudder was, and through it came a kind of distillate of the movement of the ship's course and of the energy of its propulsion. Traditionally too, there was a binnacle with a compass, the short column convenient to the wheel so that the steersman could consult the needle to see his exact direction by magnetic north, but once again, this kind of reckoning had become subsidiary to their echo from the communications satellite, two hundred miles overhead, that throughout the entire voyage, was plotting their exact position on the ocean. When the purser gave his pep talk to the passengers to describe the marvelous vessel they were to live in for the next week, one of the points he emphasized was the safety of these new systems. "We can never be lost, you see," he said, "even on what you may think is the featureless waste outside your windows. We beam a signal up to the satellite, the satellite beams a signal to the computer ashore, which beams back (*it sounds like a jolly party,* beamed an inebriated passenger) to the satellite, which broadcasts a signal that tells us our exact position on the ocean. It could do the same for a much smaller vessel, like a canoe, except that a canoe

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would not be strong or large enough to carry the necessary equipment."

Now, halfway through a voyage that had, so far, not been quite routine, the second officer surveyed his bridge with pride. It was a privilege to serve with the most up-to-date and largest ocean liner at present plying this route. He watched the cool efficiency of the machinery, quietly alive in its panels, proof against most human foolery. He watched the steersman, good type of a young merchant seaman, alert and calm at the wheel, standing in a pose immemorially the same since men first sailed the sea and invented the steering rudder and the compass. He bent forward to take his bearings by the compass. The card was a blur. He rubbed his eyes and looked round the room, then bent to the card again. It was a blur because it was spinning so fast. "Here, Jones, whatever your name is, what's this? Don't you take compass bearings?" The man at the wheel did not appear to hear him, his calm nautical face was miles away, flying before the vessel like a storm petrel, or simply asleep. "Here, Jones, wake up!" The officer took the seaman by the shoulder, which seemed to snap under his grip and twist away. He staggered and recovered his footing, but could not see the helmsman at first. Then he noticed him crumpled a few feet away, on his face on the floor. The wheel itself was now revolving, slowly at first, but then faster and faster until it became a blur. It was covered with a blue coating of fire that glowed and began to throw off sparks, like a catherine wheel. Fortunately the automatic panel had disengaged the wheel from the rudder at the first moment the mechanism had perceived an irregularity. There was a sudden bang and a hard percussion in the air that stunned them so that they could not see, then all was normal again, except for a sulphurous smell, a stiffness in the second officer's right hand fingers, and the crumpled black heap of the helmsman under the wheel. The officers bent forward over the binnacle and saw that the card was not revolving now, that it had settled down, and that the large northern arrow-marker on it was pointing to the left, quite correctly for the homeward run. Then he realized that they were not on the homeward run, but outward bound for New York, and that North should be on their starboard bow, not on their port.

In the restaurant the headwaiter reassured his best client that the *Agneau de Bruxelles* would not be long delayed, and why not open another bottle of the Cliquot while they were waiting—it would

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alert their taste-buds for the treat in store. As he was talking, a small procession consisting of the two table-waiters, the wine-steward, a silver trolley, and the white-clad head chef, all with serious smiles, approached the table. The headwaiter, turning, saw them, and greeted them with flying fingers and a cascade of smiles, and the chef, not to be outdone, lifted the great silver dome covering the dish on the trolley with a remarkable flourish. There was a delicious odour of meat and sauces in the air, and a small ripple of applause came from the hungry diners. With further flourishes the chef picked up the dish of *Agneau de Bruxelles* ("The only good thing that ever came out of Belgium," whispered the maitre d' with fawning complicity into the ear of the diner footing the bill for this extraordinary treat) and wafted it under the noses of all who were about to partake. Then he returned it to its trolley, picked up a dark bottle of brandy, and poured a liberal portion into a large spoon fastened into a frame over a lighted spirit-lamp. After a while, the vapour of the brandy caught fire with a pale blue flame; the chef picked up the spoon, and with many theatrical gestures, poured it carefully over the glistening, steaming meat, which as the spirit spread, seemed to burn with a lambent flame. Suddenly it seemed the flame spread where it had no business, and ran off the dish and spread its luminosity over the white cloth and over the silver rails of the trolley, at the four corners of which it burnt upright from the small ornamental pillars there. Soon it covered the trolley. The chef stood aghast, in mid-gesture, his fingers spread out towards his masterpiece from Brussels, which was now luminescing like a set piece in a firework display. Like a contagion, blue flame ran over the table-cloth, and up the white clad arm of the chef, who was soon coated with it; it ran in streamers from his outstretched fingers. From the trolley it leapt to the waiters, from the table-cloth it leapt to the diners, and there was an indescribable tension, as though the air was about to tear, then tear it did with an almost inaudible ripping sound, and the electric lights flickered out. Still the blue flame raged, the people on whom it raged without injury struck stiff in their astonishment, and table after table now caught until the room was full of flickering blue ghosts of a dining company of people, a "feasting presence, all of light." Then a woman screamed and the lights came on.

Nobody was hurt. There was no sign left after the passing of the flame except that everybody felt excited and alert, and had acquired a good appetite, which after several days of rich ship's food,

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was by no means usual. The maitre d' began to insist on the chef's offensive masterpiece being returned to the kitchens, and the chef in his turn was about to retire in a huff, he had crushed his tall hat about his ears, but the man who had ordered *Agneau de Bruxelles* insisted on tasting a piece. With reluctance a piece was placed on a clean plate, sauce was ladled, and he lifted it to his mouth. A dreamy expression came over his face as he chewed. All bent forward, anxious and interested. "Absolutely, ab-so-lutely . . . I have never . . . a dream . . . " he pronounced "please serve the lamb . . ." He took a sip of wine, and a light blue flame almost invisible in the electric light ran from his lips twice around the inside of the glass.

The Professor had been witness to these events, and participant in them—he too had "flamed amazement" sitting at his table, spoon halfway to his lips and soup crowded with little yellow-beaked flames. When the lights went on and the dining room gave its great sigh of astonishment, its release of bated breath (then slowly the tempo of eating picked up, and the clatter and hum of talk resumed as though nothing untoward had happened), the Professor realized that those few minutes were the first time his mind had not been preoccupied with the figure of the murdered woman since that sad event had occurred. It was as though her white wounded body that had taken up apparently permanent residence in his mind, had truly only done so for a period of incubation, and what she was about was to turn into sheer power, or distillate of cognition, a flame that ran its light everywhere and did not consume. Now, instead of the sad corpse, the glamorous meat, he had the blue shadow of a woman in his thoughts that walked and lived and danced quite freely. That like flame, could assume the form of anything in the world, though it would always return to its resting state as the blue shadow of a woman, and this woman-shadow is standing interested and attentive though without apparent features, only a sometimes profile—just as shadows are, only this one is a flame also, and possibly the flesh of the discarded body had only been the shadow of this versatile energetic reality. He had for some years adopted an expedient for distracting his thoughts from any obsession that had lodged there, of clearing his mind by replacing some preoccupation with an image that was both commodious and precise: he called it his "softly-thundering mirror" and he always kept the means to construct it in his suitcase. These consisted of a long plastic slide such as one slips on to

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the ends of posters so that they hang straight down—a loop of string is fastened to the slide for attaching to a picture-hook—a large pair of paper-scissors, a roll of cellotape, and a roll of aluminum foil dull silver on the one side, and silvery and polished enough on the other to reflect a recognizable figure, that would shimmer and part and return to the sound of a silvery thunder as the foil shook on a window-breeze or was shaken by the hand. Sometimes he called it his "dry lightning" when it was hung up in the middle of his room, attached to the ceiling or some fixture by means of the tape and the plastic poster-holder, seven foot tall bolt of reflective lightning, lightly thundering. Now the Professor saw that he must take, not just a slab of the foil to hang up, but he must wait until the blue shadow of the dead woman passed again through his mind, and he must allow it to fall on the dull-side on the foil, and he must mark it there with a crayon if it stayed still long enough, and if it didn't he must wait again, and he must cut out the precise shape of the shadow, and he must hang it up to reflect and thunder with the sound of faint cymbals, and be his bright companion when he grew dull.

*

In his tourist-class cabin, the Professor pissed blue fire in the darkened lavatory into a pan filled to the brim with yellow-beaked flames. In a first-class cabin, a noted industrialist ejaculated blue fire into his mistress, who looked down at him from lambent blue irises. She had stopped taking her Pill a month ago without telling him, and she had great hopes of bearing him a son in secret, or a daughter. In the event it was a daughter, and the baby conceived in the last to one day of the voyage was born unblemished, except for a slight red birthmark below her rib cage, high up on her abdomen on the right. This child would travel down the Hudson with all the other passengers at no extra charge, invisibly, microscopically. In the aft tourist lounge twenty people were sitting comfortably as if listening to a concert, they had often so sat listening comfortably to a concert. On this occasion a large potted fern had been placed on the small stage, and it was glowing with many colours, which were passing along its leaf-veins and between its branches like three-dimensional circuitry and a harpsichord playing complex, vigorous and interesting music. A series of perfumes wafted from the plant: smells ranging from hot metal to wet mould. Then the colours passed from the plant all at once, in one sheet, like a flapping ghost

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made of rainbow passing through the wall. The audience woke out of their trance, "That was the best film I've ever seen on this voyage," said one violet-haired dowager to another, reaching her hand out and stroking her friend's cheek. Coruscating globes swam solemnly into the Captain's cabin where he was composing a letter to his lawyer. They clustered together, revolving at speed, and seemed to read the letter over his shoulder. Then one detached itself and passed into his skull with a slight detonation. His pen drooped and fell from his hand. A smile of pleasure grew broadly on his face, and a bulge grew in his trousers. The globes vanished each with a slight, distinct detonation. The captain's smile grew. In the darkened gymnasium the old yoga-teacher practiced pranayama, energy-breathing, with two curling tusks of blue fiery air flaring from his nostrils as he exhaled. His smiling face radiated content. The chef discovered that his best copper pan was welded to the stove. Then the *SS Messenger* sailed out of the electrical storm and all to whom these marvelous events occurred at that instant started to wonder if they had been dreaming. Even the ship's doctor said to his assistant, who was grinding a new supply of indigestion powder in the large mortar, "Strange things happen at sea, and people dream stranger dreams than on land."

The autumn of burning leaves and brown snakes moved over the Catskill foothills like a beneficent lava. He felt like a man of radium walking through the deep circulations of molten rock and fused gems that flowed around the earth's centre, he felt that he saw in this autumn the deepest and first geology from which all this colour flowed, the branching trees in the rock, the slow lightning of silver in the mine, the trunks of darkness that were rivers of metal. He knew that the reactions in the glorious sun that made light for the trees to make their colours seen by were the same star-metabolism by which the trees built themselves, their sugars, and their cool furnace colours; he had read also that the colour of the first and original rock from which all the surface of the earth and the things on it grew, the rock known as olivine, was green, fresh green, like the sea.

*

The great ocean liner *SS Messenger* in her black-and-white uniform sailed into the mouth of the Hudson River, its wake like a memory in the water reaching back to their starting-point at the English Docks. On the ship's bridge, all was activity and purpose,

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for this was the moment of seamanship's own task: the navigation of the centre of the Verrazano Bridge so that the liner would pass exactly through, leaving both itself and the bridge unscathed. The computer in the sky could not help them with this task.

It was as though the ship's personnel had only been pretending throughout the voyage: the computer had held them in its reins. Now the men came into their own: the appointed helmsman was a ranking officer, and the minute adjustments he made to the course were true adjustments. If he made a mistake, no guiding radio would offer an obliging beam. The vessel would simply crash into the bridge.

Verrazano Bridge, soaring like the arched brow of an eye over the harbour from Staten Island to Brooklyn, was choked with colourful early-morning traffic. Now as the liner approached, the traffic crawled to a standstill, and shirt-sleeved drivers got out and leaned over the parapets to watch. Deliberately as an arrow in its bow, swung on to the target by its archer, with its green-white wake feathering in the rear, *Messenger* maneuvered. The accurate centre of their target was the place where mast and funnel would just appear to graze the lower surface of the roadway loaded with the blue, red, and green cars, the yellow tankers full of petrol, the freight-lorries, the green trucks full of fruit. Far in the distance, to the South, the liner's left hand, the Statue of Liberty stood like a metal giantess, swathed in mist, rearing her cold torch.

The morning silence was like the city holding its breath. Then one of the grubby little tugs that had been clustering round the *Messenger* like worker ants intent on grooming their queen, hooted with her steam-whistle. Before the echo had time to gather from the shores, its companions had followed suit with their whistles in a hooting and fluting that bounced and echoed round the severe walls and hollow warehouses of dockland. Easily and slowly the ship had plumbed its entrance through the arch. Then from the great span rainbowed with vehicles, all the car horns came trumpeting in greeting and affectionate derision, as the liner's sharp end entered like a clean needle slipping into a vein; the yearned-for fix. The American Connection was achieved. "A beautiful insertion," crowed the first officer, bent over his dials.

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PHILIP HOBSBAUM

The Rise of the Dramatic Monologue

THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE HAS BEEN A CENTRAL FORM of English poetry over a hundred and forty years. For better or worse, it is the dominant form now. Yet its antecedents are lost in conjecture.

The form is associated with the name of Robert Browning, arguably the greatest poet between Wordsworth and Eliot, and an originator so potent that his most advanced disciples are still learning from his work. Yet how did he come to make so startling a discovery as the monologue? A speech without context, a narrative implied rather than retailed, a character without the framework of plot—all this represents, at first sight, an elliptic approach strangely modern when compared with the narrative of Wordsworth or the dramatic handling of situations we find in Shakespeare.

In fact, the monologue is less startling an innovation than it appears, for it has definite antecedents in the drama. Why it looks so degagé is that it flourishes where the drama, together with our understanding of that form, has decayed. Moreover, it took a considerable effort to turn monologue into literature.

But let us make some attempt to define the monologue before we go on to anatomise its history. Its best known attribute is that it is spoken by a person other than the poet himself. But it would be possible to satisfy this condition without dramatising an aspect of a personality, and this is a crucial matter in, shall we say, the work of Browning. So we can add to our basic requirement for dramatic monologue a further one: that it should embody some revelation of character. However, there are plenty of such revelations in literature that have nothing like the feel of monologue. A recollection of tranquillity would hardly fill the bill, especially if the tranquillity were that of the poet rather than that of the speaker. What we would miss would be the presence of a dramatic situation.

Three conditions, then, should be invoked as criteria for this form, the form of the dramatic monologue. First, it should appear to be spoken by a person other than the poet. Secondly, it should

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reveal some aspect of character. Thirdly, it should feel like drama.

Clearly, we cannot erect an ideal to which all dramatic monologues must conform. But we can point out certain qualities inherent in the genre; that make it, in fact, possible to recognise it *as* a genre. They are the qualities that we find in outstanding monologues; in such work, for instance, as Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," Tennyson's "Ulysses," "Philoctetes" by Lord de Tabley, "Mandolin" by Eugene Lee-Hamilton, Eliot's "Gerontion" and Frost's "A Servant to Servants."

There are certain characteristics of these poems that could be permitted only in the dramatic monologue form. The fictionalizing of an attitude, for example, so that it can be seen from the outside—very often the characters condemn themselves from their own mouths. This brings in a serious point: predominantly, a figure in dramatic monologue is weak, vain, brutal or all three. Characteristically—and, in this unlike most drama—the reader is prevented from sympathising with the protagonist. This is one reason why the character portrayed has to be markedly more simple than the author who set him up. If he were not, there would be no way of seeing around him. Another point: the poem takes place at a single moment of time, a clearly defined present; it is only by recapitulation that we can take in the protagonist's past. Here is another obvious distinction between monologue and drama proper. In drama the action—even allowing for narrative inserts—is sequential. Moreover, the experience is far more complex in drama, which is why monologue form indicates a failure in the dramatic tradition.

One could say that the dramatic monologue arose out of a misunderstanding, by critics as well as playwrights, of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. There are certainly speeches in Shakespeare's plays which are revelations of character, but they are integrally part of a context and refer too closely to other events of the drama to be readily detachable without doing violence to the sense. "My Last Duchess" gives us the essential Ferrara; "If it were done" does not give us the essential Macbeth.

Yet one can say, in all conviction, that the drama began a slow decline with the production of Macbeth in 1606. The decline is marked, characteristically, by a progressive growth of monologue within the play at the expense of action. In other words, there is a correlation between defective plot and effective monologue. The very brilliance of the individual speech distracts attention from the

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play as a whole. And in that period of decline, between 1606 and (say) 1830 or thereabouts when the Shakespearean theatre finally guttered out, sometimes the individual speech is so brilliant as to form a coherent monologue on its own with little reference to a context. My contention is that later dramatists, those of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, took this to be a virtue; and that out of this misapprehension the monologue arose.

Throughout the eighteenth century, literature and the drama steadily diverged. Rowe, Southerne, Home, Ireland, Joanna Baillie—these make for increasingly tedious reading. When the dying embers sputter into flame, as in, say, the dramas of Shelley, what we really have is something like the first speech of his Prometheus—

> Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
> But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
> Which Thou and I alone of living beings
> Behold with sleepless eyes . . .

—a speech which satisfies the conditions of dramatic monologue to the extent almost of rendering the rest of the play unnecessary. At this point, we have to remember that Shelley was the favourite poet of Browning. Certainly he seems to have influenced the Browning who matters now. Browning, in fact, came out of the wreck of the drama—all drama, including his own.

For the Romantic efforts at Shakespearean dramaturgy—I am thinking of dramas by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats—stand as a background to the attempt at a literary revival of tragedy which was sponsored by the nineteenth-century actor, Macready. The work of many a would-be dramatist might have perished in the attic but for the energy of this honourable—and misguided—man. Bulwer Lytton, at a Farewell Dinner, praised Macready on his retirement for having identified himself with the living drama of his time. This has an ironic quality when one considers who it was that Macready discovered. There was Bulwer himself, Sheridan Knowles, Thomas Noon Talfourd, H. S. Taylor—and Browning. Yes, for twenty nights Macready played in one of Browning's weakest efforts, *Strafford*. This was the kind of play that Macready liked: static, lofty, romantic-Shakespearean in diction, containing enormous monologues for the leading man. In the company of Bulwer and Sheridan Knowles, Browning must

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have seemed marginal; not one of the favourites in the stable. Their plays ran while his failed; the attempt of an impractical poet on the theatrical fringe. And yet, odd apparition though he looked, Browning belonged with the rest of Macready's forlorn hopes.

Only by being a faulty playwright could Browning become a great poet. As I have said, when the action paused, the monologue was precipitated. And there are two key situations which induced a protagonist to deliver himself of yet another soliloquy: monologue as explanation of character, and monologue as the wandering thoughts of a dying man. Characteristically, throughout the drama and its decline, the former was at the beginning of a play and the latter was generally found at the end. And it was speech such as this which eventually detached itself and turned into the dramatic monologue which could exist alone. So that dramatic monologue proper tends to be either Act I Scene i of an unwritten drama or Act V Scene iii. There is little that occurs in between.

But many different strands make up the weave of the monologue. The tendency of long speeches to detach themselves went along with the misunderstanding of Shakespeare's dramaturgy, but there were several different ways of doing this. As the drama reached a low ebb in the mid-eighteenth century, the elocutionist came into his own. As far back as 1752, Dr. Dodd—better known for his forgeries—produced a popular compilation, *The Beauties of Shakespeare*. He excerpted quite ruthlessly and with little regard for the surrounding drama. The great speech "If it were done" appeared as a poem called "Macbeth's Irresolution." But, as I said at the beginning, this speech is not dramatic monologue. Too much of it refers to events in the play at large and so it cannot be self-supporting. When Macbeth says "He's here in double trust," it is vital for us to know who that "He" is. Even the name, Duncan, would not be enough. The speech, if it were monologue, would be required to establish the sanctity of Duncan, both as king and as man; as, in fact, is done in the play. Indeed, the very concept of Shakespeare as a playwright whose "Beauties" are extractable shows a critical error at the heart of romantic tragedy—in reading as well as in writing. Another case: after her retirement in 1812, Mrs. Siddons was able to make £1300 *profit* on six readings from Shakespeare. Her repertory included, among other showpieces, the Trial Scene from *The Merchant of Venice,* and this was a pièce de resistance also in such reader's handbooks as Bell's *Standard*

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Elocutionist—a compilation which went through fifty-four editions between 1850 and 1881. Bell also published a "condensed" edition of Shakespeare especially for home recitation in (and I quote) "a readable, untheatrical form." Increasingly through the eighteenth century, a play had been considered as a succession of scenes, and increasingly speeches were heard independently of the play in which they occurred. Acting had become increasingly operatic, so that Garrick at Drury Lane had played Romeo and Lear *against* Barry playing the same parts at Covent Garden. More and more the audiences had applauded the set speech as a great aria; the actor would, as often as not, take a bow in the middle of a scene. More and more the audience thought in terms of isolated effects, so that the advocates of Edmund Kean commended his performance in terms of "points," "shocks," "flashes" and (that word again!) "beauties." The sense of dramatic continuity was sacrificed in favour of an actor's theatre which had broken up into conformable fragments the drama it was supposed to interpret as a whole; and the proliferating anthologies of Shakespearean and other "beauties" bear this out.

The crucial anthology was Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets,* and it is hard to exaggerate its influence. The copy I used to read in the British Museum once belonged to the Victorian scholar, John Addington Symonds, and his marginal notes make explicit how he saw the principle behind Lamb's compilation. "Style was epidemic," he says, praising the Jacobeans for their "flashes of spirit" and "fine language." Clearly, to see a play as a collection of flashes is to underestimate the possibilities of dramatic structure. Lamb himself claims to excerpt "scenes of passion, sometimes of the deepest quality . . . that which is more nearly allied to poetry than to wit." But it is the more decadent Jacobean plays that allow monologue to supervene in lieu of action. The point I want to emphasise, though, is this: when such monologues are taken out of context, they startlingly resemble what Browning and his successors were to do. One of Lamb's extracts is a speech from Marston's *What You Will.*

> I was a scholar: seven useful springs
> Did I deflower in quotations
> Of cross'd opinions 'bout the soul of man;
> The more I learnt, the more I learnt to doubt.

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Delight my spaniel slept, whilst I baused leaves,
Toss'd o'er the dunces, pored on the old print
Of titled words: and still my spaniel slept.
Whilst I wasted lamp-oil, baited my flesh,
Shrunk up my veins: and still my spaniel slept.
And still I held converse with Zabarell
Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw
Of antick Donate: still my spaniel slept.
Still on went I; first, *an sit anima;*
Then, an it were mortal. O hold, hold; at that
They're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears amain
Pell-mell together: still my spaniel slept.
Then, whether 'twere corporeal, local, fix'd,
Ex traduce, but whether 't had free will
Or no, hot philosophers
Stood banding factions, all so strongly propp'd,
I stagger'd, knew not which was firmer part,
But thought, quoted, read, observed, and pryed,
Stuff'd noting-books: and still my spaniel slept.
At length he waked, and yawn'd; and by yon sky,
For aught I know he knew as much as I.

It is delivered by Lampatho, a kind of Jacques figure who is unimportant in a fairly chaotic plot. Yet what he speaks is, by our definition, a dramatic monologue. The same is true of other extracts, such as de Medici's vision of Isabella's ghost from *The White Devil* by John Webster; Giovanni's operatic "Lost! I am lost!" from *'Tis Pity She's a Whore;* King Henry's blessing on the young dauphin from *The Tragedy of Byron* by George Chapman—this last, looking forward, like so much else in this period, to Browning's great monologue, *"The Bishop Orders His Tomb."* And, like Marston's portrait of Lampatho, these are examples of prototypes that may have suggested to Browning the possibilities of the dramatic monologue as an independent form.

Lamb's *Specimens* came out in 1808 when comparatively few monologues had been written. But the next generation, that of Browning and Tennyson, was prolific in the form. Is it too much to say that, among all the elements behind this apparently original discovery, is the anthologists' way of reading drama as isolated scenes, as "beauties"?

For the very earliest monologues to be written as independent

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poems came in that unfortunate mid-eighteenth century when the drama was entering its last decline. The same decade saw Home's *Douglas* (1756), Dodd's *Beauties of Shakespeare* (1752), Richardson's *Clarissa* (1746-48) and also the first monologues proper, Joseph Warton's "Dying Indian" (1747) and William Whitehead's "Fatal Constancy" (1754). This last is no more than a parody of the decadence into which heroic drama had fallen. It takes off from Rowe's *Fair Penitent,* Southerne's *Oroonoko,* perhaps even Whitehead's own *Creusa* in which may be seen the very faults of objurgation and inflation that he displays for our criticism in "Fatal Constancy" itself.

But far more inherently interesting is Warton's "The Dying Indian." This is the first dramatic monologue to stand on its own feet within the terms that have been defined and without any supplementary context. Already the distinguishing marks are present: the dying scene when the protagonist looks back at his past life and also—a frequent side-effect in monologue—the use of an exotic setting as a means of justifying free rein in confession. Another side-effect is a tendency to jerkiness of utterance only just this side of melodrama—

> O my son
> I feel the venom busy in my breast,
> Approach and bring my crown, deck'd with the teeth
> Of that bold Christian who first dared deflower
> The virgins of the sun; and, dire to tell!
> Robb'd Pachacamac's altar of its gems . . .

This leaning towards melodrama is a built-in propensity of dramatic monologue. It has this need to put a weight of past action upon a speech delivered in the present, and this subjects the verse to some strain, if only in handling an amount of experience disproportionate to the quantity of lines employed. Obviously the monologue as a form is incapable of dealing with the massive contexts of tragic drama. Yet, as in some sense a substitute for that form, it must seem to. Hence the need to imply a great deal more than, in the time, can be said. This, in its turn, requires the development of a species of shorthand—jerks, parentheses, exclamations and the like—which stand instead of the stretches of dialogue and narrative that, in other forms, would be considered structurally necessary.

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So the monologue has certain qualities we would now recognise as specifically modern: ellipsis, colloquialism, and the like. Such qualities were present even in its beginning as an independent form in the mid-eighteenth century, but what has become central to our tradition now we must remember would appear as marginal then. Thus it was that the hint proffered, in particular by "The Dying Indian," was not taken up, with minor exceptions, for another forty years. Even the *Dramatic Sketches* of Francis Sayers (1790) belong really to the world of Joanna Baillie, of plays written, but not meant to be acted. Indeed, the inert work of these closet dramatists lies between the beginnings of the monologue and the Romantics. Hence an opportunity was missed. The Romantics wasted their talents on unproducible plays; they wavered about in search of a satisfactory narrative form. Of them all, only Southey hit upon anything we could call a dramatic monologue; and, unlike his fellows, his ability was slighter than the genre demanded. Every one of his five "monodramas" follows the line of Warton and Sayers—both of whom Southey acknowledges as predecessors—in representing the death of the protagonist. It is only fair to add that these monodramas with their exotic heroes—Ximalpoca, La Caba—are by way of being juvenilia, dating from Southey's Oxford days of the early 1790s. So, too, were similar efforts some twenty years later by Charles Wolfe and Thomas Lovell Beddoes which only feebly bridged the gap between Southey's monologues and those of Browning.

It took more talent than that possessed by these early monologuists to bring the form from an eccentric side-issue to the centre of the stage. The elements that we have seen going into its conception—the pseudo-Shakespearean tragedy and its orators, the elocutionists with their handbooks, the anthologies, the pioneer monodrams—were so various as to demand a tremendous act of synthesis to bring about the monologue's emergence as the vehicle of great poetry.

But the fact that Browning and Tennyson were able to develop the monologue at the same time, and independently of one another, shows that it must have been immanent in the atmosphere of the 1830s. Nevertheless, the form could not be truly central until an age when the major poetic and dramatic forms had broken down.

Browning's superiority over his predecessors can be localized as a superiority of plotting. This can be seen if we compare his greatest monologues, not so much with Southey or Beddoes, as with his own

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raw material. For example, Browning shows himself in "Fra Lippo Lippi" to be a master in the art of heightening a circumstance relevant to the experiential core of his poem. In his life of the painter, Vasari tells the story of how Lippo was locked up by his patron, Cosimo de' Medici, as a means of getting him to finish a particular work. This anecdote—it is little more in Vasari—is given tremendous point in Browning's retelling, for he makes it the entire raison d'être of the monologue. Lippo explains to the guard who has stopped him in the street exactly who he is—

> Zooks, what's to blame? You think you see a monk . . .
> Aha, you know your betters . . . Who am I?
> Why one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
> Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
> Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
> I' the house that caps the corner . . .

This gets us immediately into the thick of the plot. The occasion for the monologue is the suspicion of the guard; the explanation leads us to the immediate circumstances of Lippo's breaking loose—

> I'd been there three weeks shut within my mew,
> A painting for the great man, saints and saints
> And saints again. I could not paint all night—
> Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
> There came a hurry of feet and little feet . . .
> And a face that looked up—zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
> That's all I'm made of . . .

—which in its turn is a revelation of character that leads us to a narrative of his past life. But the important point to notice is that this is more than recollection: the whole is framed by the dramatic situation of the present, Lippi confronting the guards. And the "narrative" is spoken *to* the guards—interlocutors whose reaction—"Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head"—is implied in the text and indeed forms a counterpoint to it. These were great developments upon the preceding examples of the monologue and have not been sufficiently taken up by practitioners of the genre since.

But Browning in "Fra Lippo Lippi" shows himself not only a

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master of the heightened circumstance but also a practitioner in the art of paring away. One sacrifices even striking detail in favour of preserving the experiential core. Thus Browning deliberately omits one of the most picturesque circumstances in Vasari's life of Fra Lippo: the painter's capture at sea by a Moorish galley and the eighteen months of his imprisonment in Barbary. This adventure is left out most probably because it would suggest a disruption in Lippo's life as a monk. Historians still dispute whether or not Lippo Lippi, as Vasari said he did, actually threw off his clerical habit. Certainly he was called Fra Lippo throughout his life and appears tonsured in his own self-portrait. But, in any case, for Browning's purpose, it was essential he remain a monk; for the poem is an allegory. Just as surely as the monks have doubts about this rebel troubling their ranks, so society seems to regard the value of an artist's work as not worth the nuisance of having him in its midst. This is a romantic view, and Browning, a romantic artist himself, represents Lippo Lippi, by reason of his art, detached from society. However, this need not make him amoral—

> For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
> First when we see them painted things we have passed
> Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
> And so they are better painted—better to us,
> Which is the same thing . . .

In its turn, the art is a vision of the universe. This implies that Lippo's art is beyond the confines of religion—which, if we accept the poem as an allegory, means that it is beyond the received values of society. The painter is a monk because he cannot live by painting; the monastery represents a context in which he is able to survive. In youth, Lippo tells us, he had his share of starving—

> I was a baby when my mother died
> And father died and left me in the street.
> I starved there, God knows how, a year or so
> On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
> Refuse and rubbish . . .

The alternative was obvious. To the monastery—

> "So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father

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> Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection time—
> "To quit this very miserable world . . ."

But Fra Lippo chooses to make use of the monastery rather than be absorbed by it—

> You should not take a fellow eight years old
> And make him swear never to kiss the girls . . .

This past—Fra Lippo's poverty-stricken childhood—is beautifully evoked, but it has its place in the plot. It is the present clash with the guard that provokes the self-explanation; and the clash itself is made to seem the archetype of all manner of contretemps with society. We can recognise what is left out by having recourse to Vasari. Still, if this is not a complete life history, it is considerably more than a speech excerpted from a play.

The art of monologue, then, is at once restrictive and economical. This means that only certain kinds of character can be depicted—mostly the irresponsible, anti-social or weak—because such characters tend to get themselves into situations which require self-revelation. Another restriction tends to make for a greater degree of artistry than might have been expected: the author's judgement can only be implied, and then only in the manner of his writing; though, at his best, Browning is able to set up a creative tension between what is said and how it is being said. Most obviously of all, the action necessarily is more restricted than that of drama: the monologue we have looked at is of the explanatory Act I Scene i type.

Tennyson's earliest efforts in this line are more like Act V Scene iii. They date from the 1830s and differ significantly from the exactly contemporary monologues of Browning in being lyrical in tone and narrative rather than dramatic in technique. Rather than plunge into a dramatic situation, Tennysonian monologue tends to brood over events after they have occurred. Characteristically, Tennyson's protagonists find themselves in situations whose only logical resolution is death. This is true of "Oenone," "The Lotos Eaters," "St. Simeon Stylites," "Tithonus" and "Tiresias"; it is, perhaps, less true of his finest effort in this form, "Ulysses." I need hardly say that the legendary figure was a hero of great cunning whose later life was a series of strange adventures encountered in

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his attempts to reach his homeland after the siege of Troy. Tennyson, imaginatively enough, depicts him after his adventures are done, safely ensconced on his isle, but pining for a life of action again. On closer inspection, it appears that the activity is—like the imagery in Tennyson's other monologues—something of an illusion. The static present is far more real in the poem than the adventurous past. Indeed, Ulysses has this in common with "Stylites" and "Tithonus"; it shows a man at the term of his life. The predominant mood is one of gloom and exasperation.

> It little profits that, an idle king,
> By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
> Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
> Unequal laws unto a savage race
> That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me . . .

—"idle," "still," "barren," "aged": the verse insists upon these adjectives, and they, in their turn, show the reason for Ulysses' inactivity.

True, he has led an active past, but this also, in his recollection, is made to seem static—

> . . . Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
> Vext the dim sea . . .
> . . . Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy . . .

Nor is the past particularized: what matters is not the life of heroic action but the winter of Ulysses' present discontent. A good contrast would be with the speech to Achilles spoken by Shakespeare's Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida,* a speech to which Tennyson's poem superficially owes a certain amount. In Shakespeare the character is counselling action and all the imagery is highly dynamic. But in Tennyson the reverse is true. His Ulysses may counsel action—"'Tis not too late to seek a newer world"—but the weight of imagery suggests he won't achieve it. However, the disparity between Ulysses' desires and his present weariness creates a tension which renders this monologue more interestingly complex than its fellows. It is a success, though a tenuous one, to turn a heroic character into a static valetudinarian; and Tennyson has managed it.

From the 1830s and 1840s, the time of the earliest monologues of Browning as well as Tennyson, the form was established as one

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capable of major poetry; established, one ought to say, in terms of literature and technique rather than in critical favour, for the public mind took quite a time to catch up with this latest development in poetry. Indeed, the critics saw the Victorian age essentially as one of lyric. In a sense, it was: much of the weight of fiction was taken over by the prose novel, but this makes the verse monologue all the more important. Insofar as poetry was capable of bearing serious reference to the outside world, the monologue proved to be the clue to the period. Underground as it sometimes was, submerged as critical opinion since that time has allowed it to be, the monologue nevertheless was the lifeline of English verse when poetry was in danger of losing its foothold in civilisation as a relevant art-form.

It took a little time for the example, particularly of Browning, to be imaginatively grasped rather than parasitically reached towards. Yet the period was to favour the erection of character in lieu of personal utterance, if only because it at once doubted moral issues and yet was concerned to exhibit a good front to the world. The poet might wear a stovepipe hat and go to church, but his characters lie, fornicate and murder with impunity. In Browning and his more gifted successors, a great deal of psychic energy was released, much of which had lain in abeyance since the time of Shakespeare because there was no dramatic fiction capable of giving it shape. And it is this interest in the creation of character, particularly at a psychological extreme, that typifies the School of Browning.

My mention of a School of Browning may be found puzzling. It passes for fact that fifty years or more went by before monologue was resuscitated by Ezra Pound. But, as we shall see, monologue never ceased to be written. Indeed, the tradition after Browning has remarkable continuity.

Browning's most notable successors were Walter Thornbury, Augusta Webster, Aubrey de Vere, Jr., Sebastian Evans, Lord de Tabley and Eugene Lee-Hamilton. The last two are major poets unjustly neglected. De Tabley, a synthesizer rather than an innovator, learned a good deal from Tennyson as well as Browning. His main theme is that of irrevocable loss. This is indicated by his choice of personae: Semele, Saul, Minos, Iphigeneia, Orpheus, Echo—all characters on the margin of society. Perhaps his key figure is Philoctetes—subject both of a verse drama (1866) and a

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monologue (1863); and the two have not a single line in common. One would infer from this that de Tabley had much to say upon the subject—the man with a hidden wound, deserted by his friends, in exile, consumed with internal self-reproach, given to outward defiance—

> Ye have done well to leave me. 'Tis most wise
> And friendly, too, expedient, generous:
> Why this is bounty's crown; I have deserved
> No less than a sick hound . . .

There is no doubt that the character's wound is severe enough to explain his being abandoned by his men, even though his recognition of this cannot alter the reality of his pain. This is superbly actualized in de Tabley's description of the island where Philoctetes is marooned.

> Silence on silence treads at each low morn.
> Pain and new pain, some glimpse of painless sleep,
> And waking to old anguish and new day . . .
> I hate this island steep, this seam of beach,
> This angled desolation of grey rock
> Man tills not: and man reaps not, woe is me.

The pain of exile and the bitterness of isolation—these are de Tabley's themes, and no wonder they have not made him popular. His greatest single gift is for the creation of atmosphere. And though this sense diminished after his early phase, after about 1870, the later poems retain a Browningesque sense of character and show considerable ingenuity in managing a plot.

Almost as neglected is Browning's other major disciple, Eugene Lee-Hamilton. He is a notable lyric poet, but shows most range and form in such dramatic monologues as "Mandolin" (1882) and "Ipsissimus," "The Wonder of the World" and "Abraham Carew," all published in 1884. They serve to remind us how far Browning created the properties and settings used by writers of monologue. The speaker in "Mandolin," for instance, is a particularly venomous Cardinal who tries vainly to break the affection of his ward for a low-born musician. The Cardinal has the young man murdered and is haunted thereafter by his mandolin—"no sleep for eighty nights." What compels attention is not so much the plot as its realisation: the effects of insomnia are powerfully

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marked—". . . My mind goes hazy and my temples swell." Lee-Hamilton's catalogue of symptoms is clinically exact, even to this extent: that everything happening in the poem could have been hallucinated by a mind deranged through lack of sleep. Quite likely the sound of the mandolin was not so much the cause of insomnia as its effect. However, the Cardinal cannot know that, and the whole matter is given excited realisation through his own tormented consciousness.

> Now 'tis a rapid burst
> Of high and brilliant melody, which ceases
> As soon as it has waked me with a leap.
> And now a sound, at first
> As faint as a gnat's humming, which increases
> And creeps between the folded thoughts of sleep,
> Tickling the brain, and keeping in suspense
> Through night's long hours the o'er-excited sense . . .

Notice how appropriate the theme is to monologue. If any one other than the Cardinal were telling the story, we should have to decide whether the mandolin player was hallucination or ghost. The best exponents of Browning's monologue were those who did most with it. And this is true of Lee-Hamilton whose studies in hypochondria probe with psychological precision the vulnerabilities of the human mind.

In the 1890s a cross-fertilization took place between the monologue and the lyric. There flourished a whole school of poets conventionally associated with Swinburne but who themselves regarded Browning as their master. Ernest Dowson called the latter poet's monologues "masterpieces in verse" and particularly admired—what is the key to the writing of monologues—Browning's "tact of omission." And Arthur Symons not only wrote some distinguished dramatic monologues himself but produced a whole study of Browning which was enthusiastically appreciative. He wrote of "Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi"—"to conceive a drama, to condense all its significance and import, into some few hundred lines, this has been done nowhere with such absolute perfection as here." And Symons's contemporary, John Davidson, contemplated a book of monologues called "When Man Met God" spoken by Judas, Caesar Borgia, Calvin, Cromwell and Cain. Of these, only Cain was written—it was published after Davidson's

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suicide in 1909—but it embodies the pessimism that might have been expected from Davidson's grim choice of subjects. However, of all these 1890s poets, it was Lionel Johnson who threw tendrils forward into the twentieth century and by his felicity of style decisively influenced the Imagists. His "Julian at Eleusis" (1887) was a tightening up and revision of a narrative that had originally appeared when he was at school—

> Caverns of haunted Ephesus! Your gloom,
> Sweet with a dreamy incense, showed my youth
> In earliest of mysterious ways: whenceforth,
> Up mounting, brightening labyrinths I traced
> Mine homeward journey to the eternal Light . . .

Writing such as this, together with the semi-dramatic projections of Ernest Dowson, influenced the young Ezra Pound beyond these authors' merits; and this must be their strongest claim to fame. Pound was intellectually isolated in the America of his boyhood and read at school a popular series of selections from such poets as Symons, Johnson and Dowson. These must have seemed to him England's *dernier cri*. Partly the influence was unconscious, for he insists some years later in his introduction to Johnson's Collected Poems that his effort was to improve upon the bookish dialect of these poets of the 1890s and to write "the language as spoken." Yet, if we look at Pound's early work, we can see how these poets helped to bridge the gap between himself and Browning by giving him access to a lyrical-descriptive form of monologue in which, characteristically, the speaker harks back to a happier past—

> I am homesick after mine own kind,
> Oh I know that there are folk about me, friendly faces,
> But I am homesick after mine own kind . . .
>
> ("In Durance," 1907)

This, unrealized though it may seem, was the plasm from which Pound fashioned his later poems and from which, in his turn, Eliot learned as well. It must rank as one of the creative endeavours of the twentieth century, Pound's adaptation of the dramatic monologue. Critics do not seem to realize how many times in his early years Pound essayed this form. There are thirteen examples in his first four slim volumes, all written before 1912. Some, indeed, are excessively Browningesque ("Scriptor Ignotus," "Fifine

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Answers") and the only one that keeps its place in the anthologies is the robust "Altaforte" of 1909—

> Damn it all: all this our South Stinks peace.
> You whoreson dog, Papiols, come! let's to music!
> I have no life save when the swords clash . . .

But a richer quarry than Provence proved to be China, as was shown by the 'Exile's Letter' of 1915, and even more rewarding than that was Ancient Rome. The remarkable series of monologues known as *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1917) feels like memoir or epistle more than dramatic speech; yet there is no lack of drama in the various situations—

> But in one bed, in one bed alone, my dear Lynceus
> I deprecate your attendance;
> I would ask a like boon from Jove . . .

The creation of character lies in that wry, uneasy tone. What may be failures of technique in the original Latin of Propertius, Pound turns to self-critical irony in his English transcription. But even so, just as the 1890s are important for their influence on Pound, Pound himself, it is increasingly certain, will continue to be read for his influence on Eliot.

Eliot was experimenting with monologue very early on. "The Death of St. Narcissus," written in 1912, looked like monologue, and might have been, too, but for the need to kill the protagonist off in the last stanza. The effect is sadly hesitant compared with the poems Eliot wrote after meeting Pound. "Prufrock" is contemporary with *Propertius* and, like that poem, it turns hesitancy into a dramatic device. More interesting is "Gerontion" (1920). Far and away Eliot's best monologue, it uses the form with a freedom and adventurousness previously equalled only by Browning himself. Yet, in a way, it is an anti-Browning poem. When Browning allows Fra Lippo to describe his childhood and, later, his art, the whole poem is an accumulation of properties. Description crowds in upon description, image after image. Eliot, on the other hand, is more concerned to disperse *his* properties; to set up contradictory orders of imagery, and facts that fly apart to the near-disintegration of the poem and its central character. There is a contradiction built into "Gerontion": the monologue form which usually tightens and controls a mass of experience is here encouraged to dissipate it. At the

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end of the poem we know less about Gerontion than at the beginning. Any attempt to develop this particular technique would make for incoherence. And Eliot's later monologues are far more traditional. They are all constrictions of experience: a simple persona set in a basically simple situation. "Journey of the Magi" is clear-cut and direct—

> A cold coming we had of it,
> Just the worst time of the year
> For a journey, and such a long journey;
> The ways deep and the weather sharp,
> The very dead of winter . . .

It is a splendid poem to give to reachers who are sceptical of Eliot. But one would not wish them to stay with it indefinitely. These words belong to Lancelot Andrewes and are borrowed by Eliot for the occasion, just as "Gerontion" starts off from a comment upon the life of Edward Fitzgerald by his biographer, E. F. Benson. This must make us realise that, for Eliot, the monologue is a transitional form.

After all, one would not call *The Waste Land* a monologue. Eliot himself said that the poem is filtered through the consciousness of a single personality, Tiresias, and it is true that Tennyson, one of his more external influences, wrote a monologue spoken by that character. But other voices intervene: the substance of *The Waste Land* is considerably more than what Tiresias sees. More even than Pound, Eliot transcends monologue; without, however, losing the sense of drama. *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets* employ many techniques of transition and contrast learned from monologue, but they are, in a sense, a replacement for that form. On the other hand, Eliot's plays show us the failure consequent upon attempts wholly to transcend it. His best work comes in the wide hinterland between monologue and drama. Or, to put it more generally, in the twentieth century it seems that monologue is an essential way for a poet to learn his craft and is likely, much altered, to condition his craft thereafter.

This applies to poets well beyond *The Waste Land*. Robert Frost, Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, among others, are distinguished practitioners of monologue. But that is not how we tend to think of them. The form may have been too constricting for what such poets

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had to say. To remain within its confines might have limited their powers of expression. Therefore it may no longer be possible for a poet of real distinction to stay bounded by the monologue.

This, in some ways, is a pity, since Browning achieved such results in the form that one would imagine it still to be viable. Much of his power lies in his sense of audience, and, to create such a sense, he developed a vocabulary of nods, becks and gestures which indicate reactions of the words of his speaker.

> . . . Nay, we'll go
> Together down, sir . . . ("My Last Duchess")

> . . . Then you'll take
> Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat . . .
> ("Fra Lippo Lippi")

> . . . You turn your face, but does it bring your heart . . .
> ("Andrea del Sarto")

> . . . Draw round my bed: is Anselm hanging back . . .
> ("The Bishop Orders his Tomb")

The vocabulary seems to me developed from the stage directions embodied in the verse of Shakespeare—"What, man? Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows." It is questionable, however, whether the range of such stage directions will stretch much further. And therefore it may be necessary to allow other voices to intervene, as in *The Waste Land,* or to sublime away the explicit fiction, as in *Four Quartets,* while retaining a sense of its dramatic attributes. Time will tell; one cannot prefigure the next major poet, nor, perhaps, immediately recognise him once he is here.

This one can say: throughout the twentieth century there has been a quest for a new personalization, an adaptation of the monologue that would contain some of the attributes, not only of epic and tragedy, but, as of now, prose fiction as well. This may be seen as much in the failure of poetic drama as in the success of certain other works which have contrived to get the best out of several genres. The inference is that some derivation of monologue is likely to be with us for a considerable time to come. We had better welcome it, since the more traditional forms which it supplanted seem unlikely to re-assert themselves for our approval.

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WENDELL BERRY

The Clearing

—for Hayden Carruth

1
Through elm, buckeye, thorn,
box elder, redbud, whitehaw,
locust thicket, all trees
that follow man's neglect,
through snarls and veils
of honeysuckle, tangles
of grape and bittersweet,
sing, chainsaw, the hard song
of vision cutting in.

2
Vision must have severity
at its edge:

against neglect,
bushes grown over the pastures,
vines riding down
the fences, the cistern broken;

against the false vision
of the farm dismembered,
sold in pieces on the condition
of the buyer's ignorance,
a disorderly town
of "houses in the country"
inhabited by strangers;

against indifference, the tracks
of the bulldozer running
to gulleys;

against weariness,
the dread of too much to do,

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the wish to make desire
easy, the thought of rest.

3
"We don't bother nobody,
and we don't want nobody
to bother us," the old woman
said to me fiercely
over the fence. She stood
in strange paradise:
a shack built in the blast
of sun on the river bank,
no shade for old heads,
a place under threat of flood,
bought ignorantly, not
to be bothered. And that
is what has come of it,
"the frontier spirit," lost
in the cities, returning now
to be lost in the country,
obscure desire floating
like a cloud upon vision.
To be free of labor,
the predicament of other lives,
not to be bothered.

4
Vision reaches the ground
under sumac and thorn,
under the honeysuckle,
and begins its rise.
It sees clear pasture,
clover and grass, on the worn
hillside going back
to woods, good cropland
in the bottom gone to weeds.
Through time, labor, the fret
of effort, it sees
cattle on the green slope
adrift in the daily current
of hunger. And vision

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moderates the sawblade,
the intelligence
and mercy of that power.
Against nature, nature
will serve well enough
a man who does not ask too much.
We leave the walnut trees,
the ash, a few redbud,
graces of the ground
flourishing in the air.

5
A man who does not ask too much
becomes the promise of his land.

His marriage married
to his place, he waits

and does not stray. He takes thought
for the return of the dead

to the ground that they may come
to their last avail,

for the rain
that it stay long in reach of roots,

for roots
that they bind the living

to the dead, for sleep
that it bring breath through the dark,

for his love in whose keeping
this bloom has come to light.

Singularity made him great
in his sight.

This union makes him small,
a part of what he would keep.

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6
As the vision of labor grows
grows the vision of rest.
Weariness is work's shadow.
Labor is no preparation
but takes life as it goes
and casts upon it
death's shadow, which
enough weariness may welcome.
The body's death rises
over its daily labor,
a tree to rest beneath.
But work clarifies
the vision of rest. In rest
the vision of rest is lost.

*

The farm is the proper destiny,
here now and to come.
Leave the body to die
in its time like an animal
in the final dignity
that knows there is
no pomp in the fallen
high horse of the bones.

7
In the predicament of other lives
we become mothers of calves,
teaching them, against nature,
to suck a bucket's valved nipple,
caring for them like life
itself to make them complete
animals, independent
of the tit. Our fidelity
reaches through the night
to the triumph of their lives,
bawling in the cold barn before
daylight—to become, eaten,
the triumph of other lives
perhaps not worthy of them,

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eaters who will recognize
only their own lives
in their daily meat.

*

But no matter. Life
must be served. Get up,
leave the bed, dress
in the cold room, go under
stars to the barn, come
to the greetings of hunger,

the breath a pale awning
in the dark. Feed
the lives that feed
lives.

*

When one sickens
do not let him die. Hold out
against the simple flesh
that would let its life go
in the cold night. While he lives
a thought belongs to him
that will not rest. And then
accept the relief of death.
Drag the heedless carcass
out of the stall, fling it
in the bushes, let it
lie. Hunger will find it,
the bones divide by stealth,
the black head with its star
drift into the hill.

8
Streets, guns, machines,
quicker fortunes, quicker deaths
bear down on these
hills whose winter trees
keep like memories
the nests of birds. The arrival
may be complete in my time,

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and I will see the end
of names: Tingle and Berry
and Lanes. The history
of lives will end then,
the building and wearing away
of earth and flesh will end,
and the history of numbers
will begin. Then why clear
yet again an old farm
scarred by the lack of sight
that scars our souls?
The struggle is on, no
mistake, and I take
the side of life's history
against the coming of numbers.
Make clear what was overgrown.
Cut the brush, drag it
through sumac and briars, pile it,
clear the old fence rows,
the trash dump, stop
the washes, mend the galls,
fence and sow the fields,
bring cattle back to graze
the slopes, bring crops back
to the bottomland. Here
where the time of rain is kept
take what is half ruined
and make it clear, put it
back in mind.

9
February. A cloudy day
foretelling spring by its warmth
though snow will follow.
You are at work in the worn field
returning now to thought.
The sorrel mare eager
to the burden, you are dragging
cut brush to the pile,
moving in ancestral motions
of axe-stroke, bending
to log chain and trace, speaking

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immemorial bidding and praise
to the mare's fine ears.
And you pause to rest
in the quiet day while the mare's
sweated flanks steam.
You stand in a clearing whose cost
you know in tendon and bone.
A kingfisher utters
his harsh cry, rising
from the leafless river.
Again, again, the old
is newly come.

10

We pile the brush high,
a pyre of cut trees,
not to burn as the way
once was, but to rot and cover
an old scar of the ground.

The dead elm, its stump
and great trunk too heavy to move,
we give to the riddance of fire.
Two days and two nights
it burns, white ash falling
from it light as snow.

It goes into the air.
What once bore the wind
the wind will bear.

11

An evening comes
when we finish work and go,
stumblers under the folding sky,
the field clear behind us.

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PHILIP LEVINE

Another Life

"I'd rather be blind than see this place."
This place is the prison chapel,
its peeling Last Supper, its portable
plywood confessional. Sunday,
late afternoon, the light going fast
just before the double horn
and the filing to the cells. White haired
black man born in Detriot, my age
almost to the day, his face toothless,
lined, talks about his confinements
as though he'd had four kids, talks
about the poem he can write will follow
me all the way home, try my chair,
eat from my plate, take my voice
until I'm the one walks all night
in the rain, gets stopped by the cops
at dawn, and with the sky reddening
spread my arms and legs against the car
and feel the gloved hand
slide over my balls and pause
and go on, leaving nothing. A day
that begins inside a strange face
swollen and slow,
and ends in the night
with a weak candle, ends as a child,
ends as a gleam of carbon, or gold
blooming from lead, the blue thrill
of wild phlox blooming in the dark
for no one. Ends with Ray Estrada,
his pure face of Andalusia and Indian
gone to fat and scars, telling me
of the farm in Mexico. How he came
at 16 with the waist of a boy to live
here on Trumbull Avenue in the shadow
of the ball park. It's near dawn

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and his grandsons stir in the room
off the kitchen. Outside the rain
has stopped, the streets are quiet at last.
"We don't even have to change for work,"
he says, and raises his bottle
like the trumpets of the Mariachi
and blows into the eye of the wind.

All those years ago, I took up
my breath and walked toward these legs.
Shall I ask why the earth
tires of itself? Shall I ask
how many men, dying, passed me
the blood of their voices, the spittle
oiling their groans. My father's father
hung himself in the hayloft
while the flies circled, and I was born
howling under a tree in Michigan.
That night Harry Levine loaded the car
with samples and headed toward Ohio.
On the road, the moon heard his cries
and when he stopped to vomit
blood and wash his face
in the filling station can, he held
his own head as a mother might
and told himself, "You'll be OK,"
and rinsed his mouth with the gray froth,
went back out under the hidden stars,
paid and turned toward home.
That was one step we took together,
hand in hand. The second was the waking.

Now, before first light, the quail
bark from the orange groves
behind the shed where the day
will find them. Who could have dreamed
these winter orchards where the tree rats
drowse all day, the squirrels
come and go, and one by one the fruit
drops, great sweet navels, rough skinned

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and shining, half buried in frosted
winter grass. By noon my woman bows
to the wild brambles and berry bushes,
barren this winter except for the bright
new thorn, green at the shank, red
at the tip, crowned with a globe of blood.

JOHN TAGLIABUE

Burning Bright

I looked up
and I saw a tiger it was only made of paper
but what was the paper made of
and what were its colors made of?
and what were the trees that
made the paper
related to and
what about the painter in the
factory who painted
this job
this orange and green and white paper tiger mask?
evidently
it was marvelous in its own way
since
an artist
free and earning money for his pussy cat had a hand in it
and what was it
Vivekananda said?
I look up
the Quotation:
"If you cannot see God in the human face, how can you
see Him in clouds, etc? When you see man as God, everything
even the tiger will become welcome."
I look up
and there was
VIVEKANANDA,
vivid, orange, growling like a tiger

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July in Maine

Summer and
people are walking without any coats,
it's more like making love naked; the air caresses,
the body is pleased by its own feelings,
you are aware of its glow,
just as a plum knows it's a saint without being told—
by the halo of light around it
and because of its colors, that
which symbolists call
inner reflections,
the body of the person walking in light loose clothes
knows the day loves it and
that it loves the day
and later it will love
the night just as
easily;
whenever love's rapport is so flowery and fruitful,
delicious and delicate and beautiful
we can call it summer.

My ambition grows

While reading Marianne Moore, while thinking of you,
my ambition grows, I have the
dictionary near me
I would like to write a poem about every word
in the dictionary.
Later . . . I thought also most animals. Not all
works of art, but many all over
the world.
Desires make me feel as if I already had
helicopters. As if you and I could
fly around over Central Park.
Land wherever you want,
love.

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DAVID GALLER

A Place to Die

No, I shall never be so fortunate
To find an open field,
Who've lived my days concealed,
But it does my heart good to think of it!

Simply to lay my head among wild flowers
And gaze on cloudless blue,
Letting a breeze subdue
My recognition of my lacks and powers.

And not be missed, and never think of those
In whom I sank my love,
But suddenly to move
From tree tip onto sunbeam, I suppose.

JOHN FANDEL

An Oversight

It must have been dumped in with cuttings, weeds,
An oversight, upon the compost heap,
From which it resurrects the gold of spring
Simmered into archeological mold.
It might make a philosopher on sight,
Or fertilize believing, as I look,
Joyous to see it, daffodil, once more,
Lighting up discarded shades of summer.
I'd feel the same towards anything come through.
What it says can bear repeating, what
It is, a daffodil, blooming in the compost.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Madness at La Mancha

THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET ISN'T SUPPOSED to be good at storybook ballets. But George Balanchine's *Don Quixote* is almost as grand as the visions of its protagonist. The scale, the theatrical ambition of this work surpasses anything I've seen anywhere in the classical or the modern repertory. It doesn't quite work—the audience doesn't prefer it to the pallid *Coppelias* and *Swan Lakes* offered by other companies. But each time I look at *Don Q* again I'm amazed by what it's attempting.

Long ago Balanchine established the policy of doing one-act, plotless works and leaving the preservation of old-fashioned spectacle to other companies. But consistency is not one of Balanchine's holies, and from time to time he has added a big traditional work when the repertory needed something popular. His *Nutcracker* (1954) sells out for five solid weeks every winter. Later, when the company moved into Lincoln Center and became more secure in its identity as a neo-classical ensemble with its own particular style, there was less uneasiness about going to ballet or literary classics for themes. Two-act versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Harlequinade* came along, the latter based on an old Petipa ballet with characters from the commedia dell'arte. More recently Balanchine and Jerome Robbins collaborated on a new *Pulcinella*, which Stravinsky composed for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1920. And this season the NYCB went into competition with virtually every major classical company by staging the old standby *Coppelia* as a showpiece for its summer home, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Don Quixote was made during the first spring in the New York State Theater, 1965, when the company was luxuriating in its posh new environment. It must have been a time when Balanchine felt most confident of his powers, of his audience, and of his dancers, because not only is *Don Q* the biggest thing he's ever made, it's also the most expressive in a contemporary sense. In the mime and the dancing, the characters project feelings that might really belong to them or to the choreographer who speaks through them.

If *Don Quixote* isn't exactly autobiographical, it represents Balanchine's most sustained preoccupation with the mind of one character—the Don as outsider, idealist, crusader, who is comforted and inspired by his vision of perfect womanhood. Which would not be a bad way to describe Balanchine. The Dulcinea role of Madonna and Magdalene, servant and sovereign, was choreographed for Balanchine's then-favorite, Suzanne Farrell. It's no use pretending these facts don't influence our response to the ballet, especially since Balanchine has completed the identification by occasionally performing the mimed role of the Don.

I've been more disturbed by the personal associations in *Don Quixote* than by Balanchine's changes in the production from season to season. I

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didn't get to see the ballet until 1969, by which time the tinkering had already begun, and my feelings about it have come in the opposite direction from those of my colleagues. Most critics complain now that the continuity has been lost, the dancing mutilated—although Edwin Denby seems to be the only one who gave a good account of its initial assets at the time when they were supposedly strongest.

At my first encounter with it I felt like a voyeur; it seemed to me Balanchine was not only revealing himself more openly than I wanted to see him revealed, but he was covering himself with self-pity as well. Those very scenes that bothered me for their cruelty, though, were intriguing too. I grew more and more fascinated by the psychological sweep and the bizarre effects of the ballet. This season Farrell returned to the company after five years doing yoga and other less edifying activities with Maurice Bejart's Ballet of the XXth Century. Whether being with Bejart or leaving him has improved her, she looks very different from the pliant, vacantly beautiful dancer-creature she was before. Somehow this new firmly centered, risk-taking Farrell has shifted the ballet for me, just enough, away from its old too-close-for-comfort implications of master enslaved to his worshipping pupil, so that I could look carefully at its weird theatricality.

The scenario takes the Don from his protective household out into the callous world, where, with Balanchinian interpolations of dancing, he makes various gestures in the name of chivalry, continually brings society's contempt down on himself, and finally is brought home in a cage to die. I've never read Cervantes' novel, nor do I think Balanchine would expect that in order for us to comprehend his ballet. To me the story line isn't always clear, but neither is the mind of the story-maker. The ballet's main device—and perhaps its main flaw—is that it's told from the point of view of the hero, an old man who is either senile or freaked out on religious apparitions. The protagonist and his companion Sancho Panza don't dance, so there is no lyrical thread holding events together. The whole idea is more operatic—or cinematic—than balletic.

The dramatic events have tremendous power, and they reverberate long after they're over, but when pure dance sequences start, in the first and last acts, they're like from nowhere—dissociated from the foreboding and nastiness that constitute the main tenor of the ballet. The dance numbers constitute the only fast-moving action in the ballet, which creates a strange tension—a reversal of ballet's usual apportioning of what is ephemeral and whizzing past all the time and what we stop to think about. Something feels out of whack here, like the ocean being to your west in California.

The Pas Classique Espagnol that opens the village scene in the first act is perfectly pleasant choreography, and it looked especially lively this season with Merrill Ashley in the lead, supported by Tracy Bennett at one performance I saw, Robert Weiss at the other, and the strong young dancers in the present NYCB corps. But the people in the dance seem to be there for the purpose of doing that dance and nothing else. They're set in position when the curtain goes up and they go away when they're finished. Nobody watches them except a few supers dressed as soldiers.

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Devotees of Balanchine love the third act pas d'action best of anything in the ballet. Farrell's solo seems to me unique in all of Balanchine's choreographic output. Nowhere else is he so directly expressive in dance steps of a character's feelings—from a quiet beginning she grows more and more agitated, twisting her body, changing directions violently, balancing in distorted shapes that lead to other distorted shapes instead of to repose.

But there's a lot of other stuff happening here that has no discernible reason. A lot of beautiful Maidens do a ballet, led by Carol Sumner and Marnee Morris, who don't look maidenly or dance beautifully, and they have partners called Cavaliers, and Farrell has a partner called the Knight of the Silver Moon, and near the end two other characters come flying in dressed in black, Colleen Neary (Night Spirit) and Robert Maiorano (Merlin). Other people have told me what this allegory means, but the dance doesn't tell me, so I can't connect it properly to Don Quixote, who, by the way, was caught in a big net before it began and carried offstage.

To me, the core of *Don Quixote* is the second act, where the character of the Don and his society are most consistently worked out in one dance image—the court masque. At the end of the first act Don Quixote had become involved in a village brawl just as the Duke and his entourage were passing through. By a means that I think was made clear in an earlier version but is obscure now, he's allowed to make an appearance at court. Perhaps the jaded aristocrats think he would be amusing to play with for a while.

This court is an oppressively hard-edged, formal place, all gold and onyx, with no place to sit down except a throne. A foppish major domo announces the guests, who enter in a sweeping, supercilious procession down the center of the room. Esteban Frances has created costumes for this scene that are brilliantly indicative of the period—in heavy fabrics as burdensome as they are showy. The women wear tall helmets, high neck ruffs, dresses that sheathe the upper body and stand out stiffly from the lower, and precarious spike-heeled shoes. They hold themselves as if their role in life is to turn themselves into magnificent breakable objects. Their partners, in tights and pantaloons and rakish mustaches, look incapable of handling anything of any utility at all. They all have smooth, discontented faces and look as though they had a taste for intricate pleasures.

For a while they treat the Don as their honored guest. They dance a remarkable sarabande in which the movement is minimal and all the potency of their regimented existence is compressed into the almost sinister eroticism with which they eye each other. Various entertainments are shown them—dancers from the harems and slave markets of the Moslem world.

Then, at a signal from the Duchess, they put on masks and begin baiting the Don. This too turns into an elaborate ritual. As he's dancing with the hostess they poke him, trip him from behind. He's confused, tries to maintain his courtly attentiveness to his hostess. A man mounts his back.

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He doesn't understand. They taunt him more openly with capes, swords, red feathers. The imagery becomes more grotesque. The women promenade in a big circle around the Don, leading the men, who squat like monkeys. They dress him in a red cape and a crown of golden leaves, strike him with the flat of their swords, seat him on a wooden horse and set off firecrackers that are tied to its tail. Women circle around him in white wispy beards. Finally a woman smashes a handful of whipped cream into his face.

This is all done slowly and deliberately—the aristocrats are savoring every minute, but so is Don Quixote in some way. It's as if he loves to suffer—the more passively he endures their cruelty, the more saintly he can imagine himself. After the torture, a vision of Dulcinea appears to revive him. But even her dance is taunting as she pulls him this way and that, never establishing a clear direction to safety, and then fades away too quickly for him to follow.

One of the extraordinary things about this scene is the way it lapses from reality to delusion, from making us a spectator to events in which the Don and Sancho participate, to putting us inside the Don's view of the frightful events. The first perception makes a social comment on the people who can behave that way; the second image is disjointed and irrational, and doesn't make any judgments, it just *feels* awful. Nor can we tell the exact moment when we've slipped over the line of reason.

In fact, the entire ballet slides back and forth between these two theatricalities. The third act consists almost entirely of fantasies: he dreams of Dulcinea as a symbol of beauty and goodness who is kept powerless by the evil magician Merlin; he charges to the rescue but she's carried off. He's suddenly fighting a giant puppet version of himself that turns into a whirling windmill whose blades lift him in the air and hurl him to the ground again. Horribly, he's stampeded by a herd of pigs, becomes an animal himself, crawls docilely into the cage brought by faceless men in black capes. Then after he's brought home and put to bed by his servants, the last, overwhelming series of hallucinations: an Inquisitorial procession, the burning of his books, and his Dulcinea-Madonna statue miraculously beckoning him to reach once more for divine mercy. He rises toward her, arms pleading to be united with her, but she vanishes and he falls back dying. The servant Dulcinea absolves his madness by placing two sticks in the form of a cross on his lifeless body.

The composure with which Farrell now performs this act—and all her other tasks as the "real" servant girl—makes her seem almost unnaturally plain in contrast to the violent and chaotic images fermenting in the Don's mind. You can't find in his home and friends anything that would excite such gross imaginings, and this makes his efforts all the more pathetic. I think this contrast has to do with what Edwin Denby calls the changes of scale in the ballet. The thing keeps going from ordinariness—Dulcinea washing the Don's feet, Sancho Panza shaving him, a bunch of Spanish girls dancing in the village square, the Don and Sancho clomping in on a sleepy old horse and a donkey—to extreme, distorted fantasy.

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Though the transitions between these two states are so gradual that we don't always realize when they are happening, Balanchine has been very clear about the symbolic connections underlying the changes. Almost everything "real" in the ballet has its analogue in some later fantasy, almost every monstrosity is an echo of a religious ikon. Whatever is sound or innocent in the Don's life gets filthied by injustice or burned by cant. In the opening scene his books of knowledge release phantom knights and Inquisitors like insects from a nest. The faithful Sancho's shaving soap gets pushed in his face later to mock him. The peasants' good natured hazing in the village foreshadows the ingenious cruelty at court. Sancho, who's gone through all his trials with him, finally becomes his keeper, leading him into the cage that looks like the iron bars of the palace gate.

In almost all of these fantasies, the Don sees the world as altered from its proper size. The books that come to life are themselves oversize, but the figures representing knights on horseback are played by children. So is the first little princess that he tries to extricate from that battle. Later he watches a traveling puppet show where the actors are children, and takes it into his head to intervene and save the Christian heroine from the Turks who are trying to abduct her—and he wrecks the puppet booth in the process.

If the objects of his misguided benevolence are all miniatures, his enemies are giants. Even the Duke and Duchess and their court seem inflated in their high heeled shoes, voluminous dresses, capes, tall hats. They're hidden from him too, these enemies, behind masks or armor or clerical garb. His derangement takes the form of a profound alienation—and also a vast arrogance. No one in the world is his equal. Those characters who match him in size are inferior in station—his servants, the peasants and village characters, the exotics who dance at court.

Only Dulcinea of all his fabrications is human scale—and his confusions about her are the most enigmatic part of the story. Dulcinea is not just a simple girl who works in his house; she's the princess he would save from dragons, the dead poet's mistress whom he rescues from her accusers, the good fairy who tries to save him from his tormentors, and finally the Virgin statue that remains a distant ideal. Though she's a religious symbol to him, he wants her to be human and humble too.

I find it impossible to avoid seeing sexual implications in Dulcinea despite the chivalric premise of the ballet. Her Magdalene gesture of drying his feet with her hair in the first act isn't accidental. I can't believe that she holds no earthly attractions for the Don, who's overstimulated by everything else around him. His final attempt at union with her Madonna-self is the only really clumsy stage business in the ballet: he stands on a narrow elevator platform that's covered by his carefully arranged fifteen foot long nightclothes. As it slowly rises I see a phallic image, not a spiritual one. But even if she's supposed to be pure and his love for her isn't sexual, she's a temptress. Whether he's looking for consummation or consolation, his own mind thinks she's promising what she can't really give.

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Despite all that he must undergo, I find it hard to feel sorry for Don Quixote. I keep wondering why his servants are so loyal, why Dulcinea loves him, why he's allowed out to commit his moralistic mayhem on the course of other people's lives. He has no idea of the consequences of his heroic gestures or even the reasons for them. His code is as blind and absolute as the one he seeks to combat. He thinks he's too good for his world, but he doesn't even recognize the good that's around him.

Perhaps the dancers who take this role can't find its sympathetic core either. I've seen Richard Rapp, Jean-Pierre Bonnefous and Jacques d'Amboise do it over the years, and they all maintained a tone of passivity throughout, except when seized by some zealous notion of charity. They were like sleep-walkers or psychotics who could rouse themselves only by giving vent to violent aggression. I always look for signs that the Don is losing his apparent contact with the events around him and drifting into hallucination, but I never see it. So I have to conclude that he's never really in contact. Perhaps Balanchine is telling us that the saintly man in society *is* mad, or that society will always see him as mad, or that the acts of society aren't any more rational than the ravings of a mystic.

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Reviews

FREDERICK BROWN

Alain

BEFORE WORLD WAR II, the philosopher Alain was as celebrated in France as Henri Bergson, and, to all appearances, the latter's foil. Where Bergson felt at ease sitting in official chairs or moving in official circles, his urbane figure decked with laurel, Alain had a profound aversion toward the Establishment. Where Bergson, from the dais of the Collège de France, delivered rat-a-tat lectures before a general public who came more to revere than to learn (attending them was *de rigueur* for certain fine-feathered ladies), Alain taught gifted adolescents at a high school round the corner, the Lycée Henri IV. Until his retirement, this massive, square Norman whose accoutrements—broad-brimmed hat, cane, country gloves—gave him the look of a squire passing through Paris, commuted every day between his classroom in the Latin Quarter and his cottage in the suburb of Le Vésinet. Students called him *"l'Homme,"* "The Man," thus distinguishing him from imperfect specimens of the genus, who bore titles and names. Offered a chair at the Sorbonne, he declined it sooner than betray his conviction that "truth is dishonored by power."

The State, finding that it could not elevate him by other means, knelt, for one brief hour in June 1934, when Alain gave his last class at Henri IV. Sitting among his other students was the Minister of Education. If, on that occasion, he made the points he had driven home throughout his career, a timely lesson never proved more tragically ceremonious. Four months earlier, Right and Left had clashed in the streets of Paris, system versus system, ideology versus ideology, sacrificing human blood. In 1936, at the Paris World's Fair, two stone colossi, standing before the pavillions of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, would face each other like the *numen geminatum,* the Twin Gods of the Twin Empire, Maximian and Diocletian, whose near identical images postulated a holy essence of power. Alain, upholding the principles of 1789—the Declaration of the Rights of Man—while Europe swept toward 1793, became a venerable fossil. Who would heed a humanist declaring, as he did in an essay on Greek religion, that "human life is enough," when human life encumbered mankind? The very word "humanist" lost its mobility, acquiring connotations of quaintness or dotage. Like "radical socialist"—for Alain was that too, belonging to a party so repeatedly outflanked on the left as to be no longer radical or socialist but broadly republican—it commemorated a moribund world, a world tolerant of center positions. *The Gods,* written in all haste during the summer of 1934, like a valedictory or a testament, addresses itself to the human memory, pleading for civilization.[1]

[1] THE GODS, by *Alain.* Trans. By Richard Pevear. New Directions. $3.95.

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His baptismal name was Emile-Auguste Chartier. Born in 1868 in the hamlet of Mortagne-au-Perche, near Alençon, he received his first lessons in a buggy. His father, who practised veterinary medicine, would take him along on rounds and lecture from stable to stable. The elder Chartier was in fact a bookish man, positivist and libertarian, esteemed by the gentry as much for his general culture as for his therapeutic skill. How profoundly he shaped the mind of Emile one may judge from the *propos* of Alain which elaborate ideas in a stop-and-go sequence (as if there were a foal dropped between each pithy formulation), roving through philosophy, religion, science, literature but with one eye cocked to the concrete world; forest, hearth, city, tool, animal—these are Alain's fundamental categories. The commonplace object and the everyday event. Where Flaubert beheld the Norman countryside as a spiritual vacuum, for Alain—always jogging at his father's side—it was the backdrop to a world historical pageant. "One wonders how he learns things," reported the master of his school. "He knows everything, and yet there is not a lazier child alive." At age eighteen, having left Alençon to study at a lycée near Paris, this polymath, betrothed by family and teachers to the assumption that he would pursue a scientific career, found his Mentor in Jules Lagneau. Lagneau, who taught philosophy, helped deflect him from the Ecole Polytechnique to that most elite of institutions, the Ecole Normale Supérieure. In 1892 he got his diploma, the *agrégation de philosophie,* and embarked upon a teaching career of his own. "Our author," he wrote ironically, many years later, "was naturally destined to produce a small number of articles for learned journals, and perhaps one austere monograph, like that *General Analytics,* a youthful work he destroyed without compunctions . . ."

Had Emile Chartier died in 1906, before the epiphany of Alain, his name would indeed be quite as obscure today as his early essays on problems of perception. He held posts first in Pontivy, then in Lorient and Rouen, finally graduating to the Lycée Condorcet in Paris. He wrote for *La Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale,* Elie Halévy's journal, earning recognition with its guild. On the surface of it, he had committed himself to an eminently well-beaten, neutral path. There was, however, another Emile Chartier nowhere more at home than on battlefields attacking the powers-that-were. While one published esoteric "Dialogues between Eudoxus and Aristes" in the *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale,* his *döppelganger* published diatribes against the anti-Dreyfusards in the *Lorient Dispatch.* While one considered himself a Platonician or a Spinozan, arguing that "the cult of Reason" is "the foundation of the Republic," but arguing it up above, in the empyrean of Ideas, the other made common cause with petty-bourgeois radicals, founding a worker's college. The formal devices to which he had recourse—dialogue and pseudonym—if they gave the lie to an inner conflict, afforded him some measure of integrity as well, yoking his "red" self, forever in high dudgeon, to his "white" self, charmed by abstraction or, anyway, by knowledge for its own sake. The yoke holds together what it holds apart.

This arrangement served him for years. Thus, in 1902, an issue of the *Revue de Métaphysique* carried an essay by Emile Chartier, "The Idea of Object"; during the spring electoral campaign, there appeared, in Rouen

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newspapers, articles of political commentary by Quart d'oeil, R. P. Phileas, and Philibert—the philosopher multiplying his worldly aliases. In 1903, he founded another worker's college, this one on Montmartre, all the while burrowing deeper into a monograph entitled *General Analytics*. It became more and more difficult, however, to reconcile these modes of intellectual endeavor, or, rather, to distinguish them, to accommodate one head under different names and one body of thought in antithetical styles—so difficult that he finally staged an auto-da-fé, committing his academic moiety to the flames. "This eleventh of December 1905," he recorded in a diary, "I have just burned about three hundred pages written some time ago, bearing the title General Analytics . . . Philosophy is no fit occupation for a young man; since he is not yet capable of reflecting closely upon the nature of things, he is, as a result, reduced to a kind of algebra, full of cryptic notations."

Ever since 1903, he had been writing a weekly chronicle, a *propos,* for the moderate leftist *Rouen Dispatch*. After 1905, he wrote one every day, "*génie ou non,*" "genius or no genius," delivering himself of reflections on "the nature of things," bringing his immense erudition to bear upon commonplaces and events, treating his column as a palimpsest where the immemorial illustrates the quotidinal, where each fresh layer of newsprint exposes a layer of the past. Taken all together, these *propos* constitute an "Intellectual History of Everyday Life," observing the calendar year but *sub specie aeternitatis,* hugging nature but mindful of eternal returns. "Steeped in great philosophy, I censured the notion of its being too beautiful for journalism." Between February 16, 1906 and September 1, 1914, three thousand four hundred and ninety-eight *propos* appeared in the *Rouen Dispatch*. That they appeared at all, that a daily newspaper would publish essays so intellectually taut as to force second readings, so metaphorical, precise and cadenced in their language as to be philosophical prose poems, makes the mind boggle. After World War I, the pace of life having quickened, and the public that could tarry over a well-wrought *pensée* every morning having dwindled, Alain found himself evicted from his corner of the *Rouen Dispatch*. Disciples thereupon created *Libres Propos,* a paper consisting of one *propos* by Alain and variations on the theme by others. Now weekly, now monthly, and surviving an hiatus of three years, it managed to improvise existence from 1921 to 1939 when World War II savaged it for good. Meanwhile, various houses published compendia under titles like *Propos sur le Bonheur* (recently brought out in an English translation by Ungar)[2], *Cent Un Propos,* or *Propos de Littérature*. Abstracted from newspapers, the *propos,* whose essence was its daily enterprise, became an artifact, a "classic," and Emile Chartier one with his Pseudonymous Self.

He borrowed "Alain" from the great fifteenth-century Norman poet, Alain Chartier (thinking, no doubt, of the *Quadrilogue invectif* in which France exhorts her divided subjects to unity, courage and faith, rather than of Chartier's famous poem, "*La belle dame sans merci*"). It suited him to sign his daily labor with a Christian name only, like the medieval stonecutter hewing cathedrals cut by cut, or the colossus doing miniatures for

[2] *On Happiness,* by Alain. Trans. by Robert D. and Jane E. Cottrell. (New York, 1973).

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Berry's Book of Hours. "If we thought in terms of the seasons and of peasant celebrations," he wrote in *The Gods,* "we would think truly; if we thought of the country before the city, we would think justly, for the city cannot feed itself. Neither can the spirit feed itself. A temple gives us more to think about than a book, and temples are more at home in the fields and woods than standing above crowded buildings and torrents of men." But his pseudonym also reflected the obvious—a need for incognitos, a feeling that he was not free unless hidden. Addressing all mankind, like Montaigne (to whom he often heard himself compared), he did so, paradoxically, in the spirit of his beloved Descartes, "*Larvatus prodeo,*" "I go forward masked," as though "Alain" were heir to that esoteric self Chartier would have burned away. Famous, he identified with an obscure man, Jules Lagneau, his high school mentor, who died in 1894 but not before disapproving Emile Chartier's first sallies into political journalism. Lagneau was the model he had resolved to imitate at age eighteen, and could not, not to perfection. "Lagneau was the only Great Man I have ever met," he wrote at age seventy-two. "All the serious hours of my life have been occupied trying to answer this question: 'What did Lagneau think? What did he *mean?*' " One senses, particularly in the late *propos* where his language turns in upon itself, formulating sybilline images like an oyster, and in *The Gods* where he proudly describes Book II as "a mass of reflection," but oftentimes in the early *propos* as well, that he played Lagneau with his readers—the unplumbable head, the dense Inside, the Sphinx to whose conundrums they would awaken every morning asking themselves "What does he *mean?*" The more famous he became, the more banal he felt. Old and re-reading early *propos* written by a truly unknown Alain, by "another," he admired the latter rather as young Chartier admired his Master: "This lovely edition takes me back to my *propos* in their glory. They are metaphorical. They leave the reader guessing."

It must be borne in mind, furthermore, that Alain, a contemporary of Claudel and of Valéry—poets he often invokes—shared their pre-occupation with "objective" language, with a sacred tongue distinct from *les mots de la tribu,* "words of the tribe." "Alain" itself—the pseudonymous mind to which Chartier refers in the third person—served an ideal of impersonality common to symbolist esthetics and philosophical rationalism, matching Paul Valéry's "Monsieur Teste." Indeed, a remark Alain once made—"Future critics will have to ponder the secret of influence; for example, Mallarmé's upon Valéry and Claudel, Lagneau's upon me and upon so many of my students"—implies that, in his own view, these apostolic successions were perfectly congenial. The several gnomes Lagneau bequeathed him ("There is no such thing as subjective knowledge," "The body is in the mind," "Thought is the measurer") translate a longing for absolute intellectual order, for withdrawal from the phenomenal world reminiscent of Mallarmé's late verse. In *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard,* for example, silence invades the printed page, rubbing away characters, much as the Cartesian *reductio*—measurement, or "extension"—disqualifies sound, odor, texture, color.

Thought is the measurer. On this proposition Alain, in *The Gods,* con-

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structs an ontogeny of civilized man, beginning with Pan's birth and ending with Christ's. "Man is a thinking animal," he writes, "who is no more divorced from his belly than he is from his heart or his head. And we would also be as little surprised by the wisdom of antiquity as we are by the ancient gods. We carry all of this with us, as we carry our childhood with us." And, elsewhere, "All religions exist together in man. . . . Religions are less the stages of man's history than the stages of his growth." Just as he defines growth in terms of the capacity to measure, to delimit, to fix or objectify, so he pursues an argument that leads from belly to head, from satyr to saint, from the chimera-gods reflecting mankind's primitive confusion between self and non-self to the Spirit, whose vantage point is hyperbolic doubt. Every baby re-postulates Pan, "All," having fallen *into* the world, but into a world of surprise, into a phantasmagoria it will not grasp until it finds its hands. Shackled by matter, beneath abstraction, it is a voyeur, a passive spectator of phenomena to which it can assign no reasons. It watches, it prays, it conjures, it imagines—baffled by a chaotic surface. Alain and Rousseau stand in bold opposition to one another. While Rousseau, arguing the virtue of an unindividuated Whole *ab origine,* of a "Self extended to the outermost reaches of Creation," would have man combine with nature, Alain would have him subdue, each day, the infant Pan inside him. "He who does not grapple with the world, is ignorant of the world." If he honors proverbial wisdom, his philosophy finds it nowhere more to its liking than in the root of verbs like "comprehend" and "apprehend," where cognition is wed to the human hand. "One prays better in the midst of nature, says Rousseau; I would say rather that one prays too much. The old proverb is better which says, to labor is to pray; for what is prayer but the search for exorcism?" That which prayer seeks to exorcize—a nature holding us enthralled by virtue of its magical interiority—the prehensile mind seeks to objectify.

"There is no such thing as subjective knowledge." We penetrate the chaotic surface directly we make a stable object of nature, whatever that object may be—a cultivated field bearing fruit at regular intervals, a physical law superceding auguries and occult intentions, a ritual civilizing violent impulses, a proverb sculpting moral attitudes, or a balance reifying justice. To objectify is to create a temporal structure within which men can recognize one another, converse, and entertain concepts otherwise unthinkable, like growth, history, experience—the object fixing time as tense. To objectify is to create civilization. If, in Proteus, Alain sees the latter's dialectical companion, or internal nemesis, Proteus, lacking a coherent principle and therefore condemned to virginity, its every moment its rebirth, symbolizes mind *cum* nature:

> Proteus is the best name for this enemy of the spirit, inasmuch as these almost violent metamorphoses, from tree to lion, to clear water, are an exact representation of the follies of the imagination, which are instantly lost.

Embedded in appearances, this pristine subjectivity begets All and

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Nothing, being All and Nothing. Unable to formulate, it assumes, by turns, every form imaginable—always pastless, always full-blown. The "spirit," on the contrary, fathers identity, its handiwork consisting in tools that measure, in rituals that arrest nature, that rob it of its immediacy, that make it a theatrical simulacram of itself, and, finally, in geometrical forms. Geometry is its sovereign expression, its very emblem. "Man has never ceased to struggle against himself," writes Alain.

> The plumb line and the compass circle are triumphs of real philosophy; and before them the dance. Not to mention music, which, in the dance at least, is at first simply a way of marking the step, which is a precaution against violence, for a man who stamps his feet is already getting excited. Song regulates our cries. . . . Ritual gestures are never sudden or unforseen; the sudden and the unforeseen are the most part of incivility.

Elsewhere, he proposes "that there is . . . something to think about in the geometric figure inscribed on Faust's threshold, which the devil cannot cross over. And the circle traced by a stick is magic, but only in its limitation and exclusion of magic."

The last book of *The Gods,* entitled "Christophouros," "Christ-bearer," achieves a prophetic elevation that brings to mind Vico's *Scienza Nuova:* this meditation upon the history of man's self-artistry, finally apotheosizes the mind that meditated it, like an eye reflecting no object but human sight itself, *ad infinitum.* In Christ, the spirit—the valuer, the measurer, the *cogito*—having freed itself from gods of nature (the belly) and of politics (the breast), becomes a religion of the spirit, a religion sufficiently humane, however, to embrace, in Lucifer, all the religions it transcends. If "the gods are moments of man," only this one, atemporal, can apprehend man's history, resisting the diabolical magician who is as contemporaneous as the child, it tempts. Christ—spirit believing in itself, "and only in itself"—consummates an epic voyage each of us must undertake every day, from pre-history through civilization, from outside to inside, from brute existence to man:

> Descartes did not scorn to raise the devil to the height of his *Meditations;* he calls him the Evil Genius, and recognizes in him the power to deceive with evidence, and even with the truth. This is a rigorous denial of the external god; and from it follows, and must always follow, the moment of hyperbolic doubt. For we must make no mistake about it, Descartes rose from doubt of the uncertain to doubt of the certain. This doubt remains. It is hereafter attached to everything that appears, for things never appear in their truth; and it is the spirit armed with itself and with things that do not exist, called ideas, it is the spirit that will unravel the wonders of the rainbow, of snow, of the lodestone, and of the sun that is only illuminating to our eyes and only warm to our skin. This famous revolution took place in philosophy. But by analogy it enlightens the Christian revolution and its striking images. For it is true

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> that the cult of the spirit is what gives value, and what puts the lower order in its place. But it is also true that the lower order will not stay in place for a single moment, and that it is unrelenting in its efforts to reduce everything else to its animal law. It is very exact to say that everything is a temptation, that every appearance is false because of the devil and true because of the spirit. Error is nothing. But it appears nonetheless. That is the essential being of the devil, and his damnation.

To hazard a comparison with Vico is to introduce Vico's *fils spirituel* and discoverer, Jules Michelet, upon whose *History of France* liberals of the Third Republic rested their case. This is the tradition Alain invokes in *The Gods*. Reading his encomium of "the spirit armed with itself and with things that do not exist, called ideas," one must keep in mind those monuments to muscle, those twin mesomorphs of 1936 who prefigured Europe's Fall. He answered physical power with an ideal of mind chastening, sculpting, interiorizing itself, the successive forms of civilization bearing witness to this endless process of refinement.

Propos follows *propos* like the regular beats of a powerful intellect. An intellect that worked every day, that believed in toil, that scanned itself. The book has been beautifully translated by Richard Pevear.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Offending Member

ROCHESTER DIED A CHRISTIAN, and thereby hangs a tale. (Dr. Johnson was almost alone in being unimpressed: "he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and health in lavish voluptuousness, till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.") If only Rochester had died a few years earlier in his usual condition, drunk, disgusting, and impenitent among "the merry gang"—say, in 1676 during the brawl at Epsom, where he managed to behave brutally and stupidly enough to get his companion Downes killed while he and Etherege ("Easy Etherege") saved their necks by running away. Then Burnet might never have become a bishop (it couldn't have hurt his chances for the appointment that he was renowned for converts in the *beau monde*) and would certainly never have written his little book on Rochester. It's a sober, thoughtful, sensible book about sin as the motor of salvation; not a memoir but an exemplum and saint's life, a manual of conversion, by a clergyman who couldn't refrain from telling the world that he had just helped to accomplish the holy dying of the most outrageous libertine of Charles II's wicked Court: "Some/Passages/of the/Life and Death/of the Right Honourable/John/Earl of Rochester,/ who died 26th of July, 1680./Written by his own Direction on his Death-Bed,/By Gilbert Burnet, D.D."

Burnet's hot-from-the-presses apologia set the pattern for later and less hasty Christian lives of Rochester: the Great Sinner justified and redeemed. For instance, Professor Pinto's *Enthusiast in Wit* (1962) reveals its intentions well in advance of page 1, opening with the Miltonic epigraph that approximately evokes Byron, Prince Hamlet, and either notorious Rochester (the second Earl or Charlotte Brontë's)—

> his form had not yet lost
> All her Original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than Arch Angel ruind, and th'excess
> Of Glory obscur'd . . .

—an image that, especially out of context, suggests to romantic readers all sorts of paradoxes: Big is beautiful, Bad is thrilling, Black is off-white; and Pinto uses up most of the rest of his book explaining to us that Archangels don't really *like* to be naughty—

> It was still possible to escape from the nightmare of boredom and despair by plunging into dissipation. He would call for louder music and for stronger wine. It was possible, but it was becoming more and more difficult. The lights were blinding his tired eyes and the music was

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stunning his dizzy brain. The Utopia of Gallantry was turning into a kind of weird *danse macabre,* a ballet of figures that were becoming ghostly and incredible. . . .

Greene the Catholic novelist is sleeker, less evangelical, less exhilarated by Archangels, but equally susceptible to paradoxes: "The spirit was always at war with the flesh; . . . [Rochester's] unbelief was quite as religious as . . . [Donne's] faith. He hated the thing he loved with something of the same dark concentration, the confusion of love and lust and death and hate."[1] So Greene's Lord Rochester not only derives from Burnet but comfortably associates himself with Greene's own fictional heroes, oxymoronic, sepulchral, crypto-metaphysical; unbelieving and therefore devout, loathing and therefore loving, empty and therefore stuffed with substance, random (randy) and therefore aimed like an arrow, damned and therefore saved. Thank God neither Pinto nor Greene makes a fuss about Rochester's dying at thirty-three (Jesus's terminal age, according to legend; Joe Christmas's, according to Faulkner); but there isn't much otherwise to be thankful for among the Christians. "Why should the *Devil* have all the good tunes?" asked a psalm-singing divine once, and wouldn't stay for an answer, which anyhow was perfectly obvious: "Because, old cock, the Devil's got something to sing about"—

> Naked she lay, clasped in my longing arms,
> I filled with love, and she all over charms;
> Both equally inspired with eager fire,
> Melting through kindness, flaming in desire.
> With arms, legs, lips close clinging to embrace,
> She clips me to her breast, and sucks me to her face.
> Her nimble tongue, Love's lesser lightning, played
> Within my mouth, and to my thoughts conveyed
> Swift orders that I should prepare to throw
> The all-dissolving thunderbolt below.
> My fluttering soul, sprung with the pointed kiss,
> Hangs hovering o'er her balmy brinks of bliss.
> But whilst her busy hand would guide that part
> Which should convey my soul up to her heart,
> In liquid raptures I dissolve all o'er,
> Melt into sperm, and spend at every pore.
> A touch from any part of her had done 't:
> Her hand, her foot, her very look's a cunt. . . .

The quadruple climax (orgasm, obscenity, high point and ending of the passage) doesn't have the effect of complication or ingenuity or shock, it doesn't express the Greene-sickness of a man who "hated the thing[! what

[1] LORD ROCHESTER'S MONKEY, by *Graham Greene.* Viking. $15.95. Greene wrote it more than forty years ago but his publisher rejected it at the time, presumably because Rochester's verses were still under lock and key in the basement alcove behind the men's room in the university library. Viking deserves credit for an excellent-looking book, elegantly printed and gorgeously illustrated.

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the Wife of Bath calls her *belle chose*] he loved," it isn't a pun or conceit on the subject of passion("O my America! my new-found-land") but rather an account of the plain facts for which Rochester has found all the words including the last one. "The Imperfect Enjoyment" goes on to describe, with the same unfailing energy, exactness, and candor, the lady's loving reproach to her failed lover—

> Smiling, she chides in a kind of murmuring noise,
> And from her body wipes the clammy joys,
> When, with a thousand kisses wandering o'er
> My panting bosom, "Is there then no more?"
> She cries. "All this to love and rapture's due;
> Must we not pay a debt to pleasure too?"

—the lover's helpless self-contempt—

> Trembling, confused, despairing, limber, dry,
> A wishing, weak, unmoving lump I lie.

—and (again quite unlike Greene's construction) the lover's all-too-effective awareness of the *difference* between love and lust:

> What oyster-cinder-beggar-common whore
> Didst thou e'er fail in all thy life before?
> When vice, disease, and scandal lead the way,
> With what officious haste dost thou obey!
> Like a rude, roaring hector in the streets
> Who scuffles, cuffs, and justles all he meets,
> But if his King or country claim his aid,
> The rakehell villain shrinks and hides his head;
> Ev'n so thy brutal valor is displayed,
> Breaks every stew, does each small whore invade,
> But when great Love the onset does command,
> Base recreant to thy prince, thou dar'st not stand.
> Worst part of me, and henceforth hated most,
> Through all the town a common fucking post,
> On whom each whore relieves her tingling cunt
> As hogs on gates do rub themselves and grunt,
> Mayst thou to ravenous chancres be a prey,
> Or in consuming weepings waste away;
> May strangury and stone thy days attend;
> May'st thou ne'er piss, who didst refuse to spend
> When all my joys did on false thee depend.
> And may ten thousand abler pricks agree
> To do the wronged Corinna right for thee.

This vindictive peroration is funny and wild and, in the rage of the moment, justifiable—not at all a burst of Swiftian revulsion—but, so the

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details attest, it's no joke either. As if lust with the oyster-cinder-beggar-common whores weren't bad enough, it's followed by a train of familiar diseases and disabilities (not to speak of the treatments at Mrs. Fourcard's "Baths" in Leather Lane). The curse that the lover calls down on the head of his offending member is mainly an acknowledgment of the inevitable.

How does a critic place and tame such impudence? Deliver it over to Freud, and Rochester becomes a psychically impotent Don Juan with a mother-fixation: " 'The Imperfect Enjoyment,' on an unconscious level," says Dustin H. Griffin, "may in fact represent a hatred not of the penis but of the woman. If she, like other women in the poems, is thought of as an omnivorous mouth, then he denies her the demanded meal." Pinto, who dotes on Rochester, tries to salvage him as "the great poet of unbelief." Professor Leavis, who doesn't, snaps back that "Rochester is not a great poet of any kind." According to Leavis, the great lyric poems of the seventeenth century are emanations of "the old fine order . . . the 'Court culture,' " from which Charles's "mob of gentlemen" were debarred by the interval of the Commonwealth, a decade or more of exile, and their consequent readiness to be satisfied with writing "cheaper things" (i.e. filth): the Restoration poet's affinity wasn't with "the country house" (Penshurst and such) but with "the coffee-house" and (actresses!) "the Green Room." In the meantime, while Griffin, Pinto, Leavis, and Greene debate the criteria for mental health and sexual happiness in man and society, the Restoration poet can't find anything better to do than commiserate with Nell Gwyn as she busily ministers to the aging, complaining King:

> This you'd believe, had I but time to tell ye
> The pains it costs to poor, laborious Nelly,
> Whilst she employs hands, fingers, mouth, and thighs,
> Ere she can raise the member she enjoys.

Under Charles's auspices, life for anybody who gave it a thought reduced itself sooner or later to such scenes as this: no wonder Rochester was a disappointed man. He had entered upon his career at Court with every prospect: the first Earl, who had been one of Charles's most faithful supporters in exile, had died shortly before the Restoration and left his son with the title and the King's good will and patronage; after a year and a half at Oxford and three years on the obligatory grand tour of France and Italy, Rochester made his debut at Court in 1664. He was seventeen, and a contemporary describes him as he appeared then:

> His person was graceful, tho' tall and slender, his mien and shape having something extremely engaging; and for his mind, it discover'd charms not to be withstood. His wit was strong, subtle, sublime, and sprightly; he was perfectly well-bred, and adorned with a natural modesty which extremely became him. He was master both of the ancient and modern authors, as well as of all those in the modern French and Italian, to say nothing of the English, which were worthy of the perusal of a man of fine sense. From all which he drew a conversation so engaging, that none could enjoy without admiration and delight, and few without love.

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By the summer of 1666 (he was nineteen) he had served with spectacular and officially commended bravery in two major sea-battles against the Dutch.[2] As for the Court wits who were to become his drinking, whoring, and brawling companions ("the merry gang"; "the Ballers"), they had already begun to practice their customary amusements as early as 1662, when "a tanner named Hoppy [was robbed and murdered] by Lord Buckhurst, his brother Edward Sackville, Sir Henry Belasyse and others," and "the next year at Oxford Kate's tavern in Covent Garden, when Sir Charles Sedley and Lord Buckhurst appeared naked upon the balcony and preached to the crowd which gathered below." The King knew all and forgave all; and many years after the little book on Rochester, Bishop Burnet wrote an immense *History of My Own Times* in which the most memorable passage is his summation of the character of the King who found such courtiers congenial and amusing:

> He had great vices, but scarcely any virtues to correct them: he had in him some vices that were less hurtful, which corrected his more hurtful ones. He was, during the active part of life, given up to sloth and lewdness to such a degree, that he hated business, and could not bear the engaging in any thing that gave him much trouble, or put him under any constraint: and though he desired to become absolute, and to overturn both our religion and our laws, yet he would neither run the risk, nor give himself the trouble, which so great a design required. He had an appearance of gentleness in his outward deportment, but he seemed to have no bowels nor tenderness in his nature; and in the end of his life he became cruel. . . . He had the art of making all people grow fond of him at first, by a softness in his whole way of conversation, as he was certainly the best bred man of the age. But when it appeared how little could be built on his promise, they were cured of the fondness that he was apt to raise in them. When he saw young men of quality, who had something more than ordinary in them, he drew them about him, and set himself to corrupt them both in religion and morality; in which he proved so unhappily successful, that he left England much changed at his death from what he had found it at his restoration. . . .

(Was Burnet, especially in that last count of the indictment, thinking back across the years to the dying Rochester, who at the time might well have made the bitter case against Charles which Burnet recapitulated a generation later?)

Burnet was a Scottish parson writing about a profligate King who had died a secret Catholic and passed the British throne on to his Catholic brother; and the parson wasn't inclined to celebrate the handsome, cultivated, intelligent, amiable, witty man Charles seemed to others and must have seemed to Rochester at the outset. Rochester was—how could Charles fail to take note of him?—a young man of quality with something more than ordinary in him, therefore worth corrupting or at any rate worth indulging, and the King

[2] Years afterward, his enemies at Court accused him of cowardice (on the basis of stories and inferences that now seem at least questionable), and of course the Epsom incident was regarded as confirmation. "For all men would be cowards if they durst," Rochester wrote in his "Satyr against Mankind": maybe cowardice was another dare he couldn't resist taking.

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. . . allowed him remarkable freedoms. At an entertainment given to the Dutch ambassador on the night of 16 February 1668/9, there was heavy drinking after dinner and we are told that the company was "pretty merry." The next day Pepys heard that among those present were "that worthy fellow my lord of Rochester," and Tom Killigrew, the dramatist, manager of the King's company of players, self-appointed King's jester and father of Rochester's friend Harry Killigrew. According to Pepys, Tom's "mirth and raillery" offended Rochester so much that he gave him "a box on the ear in the King's presence." This was a serious offence in the seventeenth century, and, if blood had been drawn, Rochester would have been liable to the medieval penalty of losing his hand. The incident, Pepys heard, gave "much offence to people . . . at Court, to see how cheap the King makes himself, and the more, for that the King hath not only passed by the thing, and pardoned it to Rochester already." Pepys was shocked to see with his own eyes on the morning of 17 February how, "The King did publickly walk up and down, and Rochester I saw with him as free as ever, to the King's everlasting shame, to have so idle a rogue as his companion."[3]

A month later, visiting at the French Court with a letter of introduction from the King, Rochester was refused an audience by Louis XIV, who had heard of the incident. The English King, however, less finicky than Louis (or Pepys), continued to encourage him to go as far as he liked, and he did, seeing how far he could go before he drew blood instead of ichor ("His scepter and his prick are of a length;/And she may sway the one who plays with th' other,/And make him little wiser than his brother"):

God bless our good and gracious King,
  Whose promise none relies on;
Who never said a foolish thing,
  Nor ever did a wise one.

But Charles is reported to have gone the epigrammatist one better by "interpreting" the epigram into a compliment: "My words are my own, but my acts are my ministers'." Rochester, for all his brilliance and waywardness, had no master suit with which to trump this King of hearts.

Rochester is praised (even by Leavis) for his formal satires—the "Satyr against Reason and Mankind," "An Allusion to Horace," "Timon," "Tunbridge Wells," "A Letter from Artemisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country," "Upon Nothing"—all impressive performances, sardonic and shrewd (though not so carefully thought out as they try to appear), more vivacious and less full-dress than Dryden, a bit too unkempt to be taken for Augustan, peppered with the details of common life; set-pieces to fill out period anthologies that have the room for something of Rochester's besides his little love-lyrics with their vein of gloomy pathos. Then there is the Rochester who went like a shot off a shovel through the membrane of decorum (which never felt a thing), raging back to a Bedlam of particulars:

[3] *Enthusiast in Wit*, p. 71.

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Had she picked out, to rub her arse on,
Some stiff-pricked clown or well-hung parson,
Each job of whose spermatic sluice
Had filled her cunt with wholesome juice,
I the proceeding should have praised
In hope sh' had quenched a fire I raised.
Such natural freedoms are but just:
There's something generous in mere lust.
But to turn damned abandoned jade
When neither head nor tail persuade;
To be a whore in understanding,
A passive pot for fools to spend in! . . .

This is from "A Ramble in St. James's Park," the most ferocious of Rochester's outlaw poems. Sometimes the particulars have a more genial air, as in "The Disabled Debauchee" or the almost never wholly unfriendly animadversions on the King's sexual appetite:

'Tis sure the sauciest prick that e'er did swive,
The proudest, peremptoriest prick alive.
Though safety, law, religion, life lay on't,
'Twould break through all to make its way to cunt.
Restless he rolls about from whore to whore,
A merry monarch, scandalous and poor.

And just once, in "The Imperfect Enjoyment," Rochester's rage for particulars is free and comprehensive enough to be called Chaucerian.

Rochester's first notable escapade at Court was the abduction of a young heiress, for which he was confined a month in the Tower till he begged the King's forgiveness. A year later, at nineteen, he married her. She bore him four children; there are characteristically straightforward letters—domestic, loving, occasionally angry and even agitated—from husband to wife (of course she stayed at home in the country, mostly patient and putting up with his despotic mother, while mostly he carried on at Court); when she "sent a servant on purpose desiring to hear from him, being very uneasy at his long silence," he took the opportunity to reply—not altogether ironically and with a more affectionate sort of sensuality than he revealed in his public poems—"To My More Than Meritorious Wife":

I am, by fate, slave to your will
And shall be most obedient still.
To show my love, I will compose ye,
For your fair finger's ring, a posy,
In which shall be expressed my duty,
And how I'll be forever true t' ye.
With low-made legs and sugared speeches,
Yielding to your fair bum the breeches,

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I'll show myself, in all I can,
Your faithful, humble servant,
John.

One pair of breeches he didn't begrudge her was control of the estate she had brought to the marriage. In an age when a woman's property became the property of the man she married, Rochester acted as her honest steward, reserving her estate entirely (as he wrote her) "to the use of yourself and those who depend on you," though living and carousing on his own limited income he was himself continually in debt and short of money. He had no pretensions; he talked straight; he kept nothing back; he was not a mean, vain, greedy, unkind, or self-righteous man.

Toward the end, ill, dispirited, "a man whom it is the mode to hate" at Court, out of fashion as his fellow Ballers grew older and dwindled into politics, Rochester nevertheless didn't yield to Burnet's Christian testimony without a fight. He didn't, for instance, admire the Christian insistence on faith: he thought nobody should be compelled to accept mysteries,

> . . . since it is not in a man's power to believe that which he cannot comprehend and of which he can have no notion. The believing mysteries, he said, made way for all the jugglings of priests, for they getting the people under them in that point, set out to them what they pleased, and giving it a hard name, and calling it a mystery, the people were tamed and easily believed it. The restraining a man from the use of women, except one in the way of marriage, and denying the remedy of divorce, he thought unreasonable impositions on the freedom of mankind.

Burnet answered that such impositions need not be considered unreasonable in view of what was promised: "all that propose high rewards have thereby a right to exact difficult performances." But Rochester must have heard the argument before under less exalted circumstances, and he was ready for it with his last piece of impudence: "We are sure the terms are difficult, but we are not so sure of the rewards." He was bracing himself for another disappointment.

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JOHN N. MORRIS

John Wain's Samuel Johnson

JOHN WAIN'S *Samuel Johnson*.[1] No sub-title, notice; no : *The Mind of the Moralist* or whatever. This simple juxtaposition of two names on the title page is part of the point. Indeed, much of the front-matter is more than usually important here—expecially, perhaps, the conventional listing, set over against the title page, of books "also by John Wain." They number twenty—four collections of his verse, the eleven novels, four books of criticism and a volume of autobiography. John Wain's *Johnson,* it appears (and as every reviewer has observed), is a writer's life. And how that life is to be perceived and imagined Wain suggests to us on that often most superfluous if not embarrassing of a book's pages, the one on which an author presses into his service some surprising (but apt, yes, very apt) quotation as an epigraph. Wain chooses two, and both really *are* so apt, so proper to the writer's life they introduce that I shall quote them. The first and less surprising one is from *Rasselas:* "Few can attain this man's knowledge, and few practice his virtues; but all may suffer his calamity." (It is perhaps better not to know what and whose "calamity" Johnson had in mind when he wrote those words, for his meaning would narrow and distort the application Wain intends.) The second, from *Alice in Wonderland,* is even better:

> —He taught Laughing and Grief, they used to say.
> —So he did, so he did.

So he does, so he does, as any reader of Johnson knows and as those ignorant of him will begin to learn in Wain's book. Together, these epigraphs—these epitaphs—are more expressive than any sub-title Wain might have devised. They suggest, what his text confirms, that for Wain Johnson is at once more and no more than we are, he is our master, instructor and exemplar, and he is these things by right not only of his strength, to which his example encourages us to aspire, but of his weakness, upon which that strength practiced and in which we are joined with him. He is the pattern of that humane learning—the Laughing and Grief he teaches, the most useful of possible knowledges—that, as he says, enables us "better to enjoy life, or better to endure it."

Such a Johnson is of course a very different being from the "stupid old reactionary," the ghostly "ancestor of the typical modern Conservative" whom scholarship and criticism have so far failed to banish from the mind of "the intelligent general reader" to whom this biography is addressed. Part of Wain's enterprise, then, must be to lay that ghost. It is his announced purpose to modify our notion of Johnson as someone "who wants social change to be either gradual and cautious, or not to happen at all;

[1] SAMUEL JOHNSON, by *John Wain*. Viking. $12.50.

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who favours existing institutions rather than radical new solutions." Wain proposes to accomplish this by offering for inspection the Johnson opposed to colonialism and the slave trade, the Johnson who insisted that "the real test of any civilization lies in its treatment of the poor," "the deeply humanitarian Johnson" who differs so from the *imago* deriving from Boswell. Were this all that had been done, it would have been enough (and maybe too much; so very modern and liberal a Johnson as Wain in those phrases seems to promise us would perhaps be as false to the original as earlier portaits have been). But Wain's book is in no such simple sense a work of biographical revisionism. He wants to get Johnson right, yes—but not so much as an object of our merely intellectual attention, the interest and intelligence of whose views on this or that matter (colonialism, "radical new solutions," the state of the poor or whatever) can now be justly assessed, as of our moral imagination, a focus of our moral sentiments.

That Wain should set up as the biographer of this man and no other is, he explains, no accident—though it is a consequence of accident, of determining coincidence.

> I was born in the same district as Johnson—some thirty miles away—and in much the same social *milieu*. I went to the same university, and since then have lived the same life of Grub Street, chance employment, and the unremitting struggle to write enduring books against the background of an unstable existence. The literary and social situation that Johnson knew in its early days, I know in its twilight. . . .

One is free to question the equivalences that in these sentences Wain believes himself to perceive. (As Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Wain is, given the elective and temporary nature of the job, engaging in "chance employment," I suppose. But somehow. . . .) The point, though, is that that is how Wain thinks of the matter. Further, this sense of a connection between himself and Johnson is not of recent or sudden growth. The Johnsonian preoccupation, as Wain testifies, reaches back to his undergraduate years.

Sprightly Running (1962), his volume of autobiography, is a long way from being Wain's best book. A scrappy, rather willed production, completed (he tells us) at the age of thirty-five years and six months (a point he self-consciously—and incorrectly—imagines to mark exactly half his three score and ten), it nevertheless has its moments, and most of them occur in his account of his time at Oxford. Those years he experienced in what he took to be a Johnsonian spirit.

> With every reason for optimism, I became a stoical pessimist. Samuel Johnson was my favorite author, my moral hero; Boswell and *The Rambler* were constantly open on my table. Johnson reflected my mood exactly, because he put into dignified and resounding prose the sense of stoical resistance against hopeless odds. I would murmur to myself, as if they were lyric poems, sombre fragments from his lay sermons. . . . But

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> it was not his gloom alone that made Johnson a hero to me. It was his tragic gaiety. Amid all this settled conviction of hopelessness, he was sociable, welcomed friends, revelled in talk, devoured books. All this I did too.

That at thirty five Wain sees that "it was absurd for me, at the age of twenty, to adopt his granite attitudes" does not affect my point (nor does his imperfect understanding of those attitudes). His Oxford years, he believes, were Johnson years. He found himself surrounded by older men in whom, however improbably, he discerned embodiments of Johnson—C. S. Lewis, for instance, and that remarkable tragi-comic figure, E. H. W. Meyerstein. (The pages on Meyerstein, "who hated Johnson and yet contrived strikingly to suggest him: physical bulk, a face contorted by some kind of stroke, uncontrollable nervous tics, hypochondria bordering on insanity, vast erudition," are the most memorable in *Sprightly Running*. His influence, as example and warning, seems to have struck deep in Wain. There is even a slight similarity between the titles of two of their books: Meyerstein's *Verse Letters to Five Friends* and Wain's *Letters to Five Artists*.) Wain had put himself to school to Johnson and his unlikely avatars. This process of education, it would seem, has continued, to issue at last in this book, the fruit, not of a year or two of research, but of some thirty years or so of meditation. In it John Wain, who had voluntarily gone down from Oxford in 1946 "with my First in my pocket" embodies what he has come to know of a man who left there unwillingly in 1729 with no degree at all, and of all that that man would come to be able to teach him. It is this that gives his work its authority. In a sense, Wain has known Johnson longer than Boswell did.

And in a sense he knows him better. Not that Boswell, his modern detractors to the contrary, is replaceable. To fret over the inaccuracies and distortions of which his book is guilty is to shovel sand against the tide. The *Life* is great and will prevail. It will never go away; but it can be used—and circumvented. The two or three pages in which Wain, in a miracle of conciseness, conveys a sense of the interanimating strengths and weaknesses of that extraordinary character convince immediately one who has read not only the *Life* but all the published Journals. And about the nature and value of the historical accident that conjoins Boswell and Johnson Wain makes great sense:

> If Johnson had been born in 1680 and Boswell in 1710, the difference between them would merely have been the difference between youth and middle age; but since Johnson's birth date was 1709 and Boswell's 1740 they are separated by one of those seismic cracks in the historical surface. Boswell is a new man in Johnson's world. . . . The fascination of their dialogue, that dialogue of mind, heart and voice round which Boswell organized his great *Life,* is that it is not merely between two very different men but between two epochs. In its pages, Romantic Europe speaks to Renaissance Europe, and is answered.

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What is valuable about Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is that it is *Boswell's* life of him. Wain of course acknowledges his great indebtedness to Boswell. But he knows much that Boswell could never know—among other things, the limitations that Boswell's character and circumstances imposed on his perceptions.

"There is no research in this book," says Wain in a note on his sources. "Every fact it contains was previously known to scholars and to any reader who kept abreast of scholarship." Just so—and as Wain's tone in these sentences suggests, no apology is intended or required. In his pages is accomplished, for once, what is sometimes said to be the justification of minute scholarship: reflecting upon the results of the labors of others, a writer composes an imitation of the image of a past as it arises in and is in part created by his informed and disciplined intelligence. It does not matter much that here and there what Wain supposes to be a fact isn't one (though it's a little surprising that this writer's life of a writer should make rather a point of getting wrong the first occasion when Johnson's name appeared on a title page). Wain manages to do well three important things. The first of these, taking up some two thirds of the book, is his depiction of Johnson-before-Boswell, his dramatization of the personal and professional struggle by which the young man from the provinces attains in maturity a measure of material success, the respect and affection of men and women whose respect and affection are worth the having, and (in some degree, and intermittently) a kind of accommodation with his private demons, those disorderly elements in him that constituted both a radical weakness and, in his intercourse with them, an occasion of his moral greatness as a man and as a writer. This Johnson (built in part on the model of James L. Clifford's *Young Sam Johnson*) Wain brings before us in a way that Joseph Wood Krutch's biography of thirty years or so ago can't quite compass and that Boswell doesn't really attempt: we come to see how very near a thing the happy, or relatively happy, outcome was. The familiar story has—of all things—suspense.

And of the later Johnson, the Johnson of the years when Boswell knew him, Wain contrives to provide a free-standing image. The account of Johnson's last months is finely done. We learn, for instance, of his busying himself—so late, but in time—to ensure that at last his wife's grave shall be marked, that at last his parents' shall be too: "let the stone be deep, massy, and hard." (It's not that these details aren't in other biographies of Johnson; it's Wain's handling of them that impresses.) But to me the most valuable part of this section are the pages devoted to the Thrales, and Mrs. Thrale of course in particular. On this subject Boswell famously is unhelpful. As Wain puts it, "Next to the award of his pension, getting to know the Thrales was the greatest piece of material good fortune in Johnson's life." The relationship with Mrs. Thrale—Hester—was "the closest . . . of Johnson's life, with the single exception of his relationship with Tetty." He makes Hester's importance to Johnson clear by allowing her to stand forth in his pages as her own person, with her own complications, her own concerns, and her own pathos. Of the benefits conferred on

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both sides—and of the failures of sympathy, Johnson's in particular—Wain writes in a fashion that does impartial and moving justice to the principals in his drama.

The third of Wain's accomplishments is his account of Johnson's writings. I am not here speaking of literary criticism. Of this there is not much in any formal take-a-deep-breath-and-discourse-on *The Death of Dr. Levet* way. (Though of course there are short hints and touches—for instance a paragraph on p. 145 that deals handsomely with certain aspects of *The Vanity of Human Wishes.)* Nor am I speaking of the moments when Wain is trying, a little too hard, to show the reader that some Johnsonian view or other is more like the reader's own than he might have supposed. (Not that Wain is necessarily wrong on such occasions. His error is not one of substance but of rhetoric: he a little too automatically accords the modern liberal pieties unquestioned respect. On other occasions he commits the apparently opposite but actually complementary rhetorical error of coming on the grumpy grandpa reading lectures to the modern age.) What I find taking about Wain's dealings with Johnson's writings is the way he carries into practice his notion that "in the biography of a writer one tends to view his works as episodes in his life. . . ." This simple and familiar conception of the task produces, it seems to me, unusually happy results. Among them is the impression—a little surprising, I should imagine, to the audience Wain is addressing, and therefore very much to the point in regard to the intention of the book—that Johnson was in his own particular fashion a highly autobiographical writer. Wain's attempts to formulate such a notion are, to be sure, sometimes unfortunate. "There were emotions lying prisoner, if we want to put it that way," he writes, "under the polished parquet of eighteenth-century rationality and courtesy." While conceding the point—even pressing it—I for one would *not* want to put it that way, having heard for years quite enough about eighteenth-century rationality, courtesy and polished parquetry. But in his demonstrations of his thesis, as in, say, his consideration of *The Life of Savage,* he is all tact and persuasiveness.

But even Wain, I suspect, will not at last accomplish the one thing needful—the return of readers to the works themselves. Early on, Wain speaks of his wish—disappointed, like so many Johnsonian wishes—that by now a "more enlightened attitude to Johnson might have spread to young people and thus slowly irradiated a generation." Even to have entertained such a hope expresses a touching faith in the power of literary education as it is now conducted. But I think Wain is right to suppose that Johnson can speak clearly to the young, and particularly to a generation like the present, who whatever their behavior do not panic when spoken to in moral terms. The few students with whom occasionally I read Johnson almost all get him right, and in no easy and trivial way. (They get him righter than Wain did at their age, righter certainly than I did.) Perhaps they hear in his voice an authentic, an earned authority inaudible in the pronouncements of other of their elders. For those of us a little older special pleasures are, to be sure, reserved—the clarification of experience

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that the Johnsonian lessons provide for those who in a sense have already learned them, the rendering intelligible of things we almost knew we knew. But to such older persons still ignorant of Johnson—or those of them able to lay out $12.50 for the book—this biography may in fact be an impediment. This is the irony, that any substantial account of Johnson's life seems doomed to subvert its end. Various as are the Johnsons that his biographers depict, they are alike in that they tempt readers to suppose that the life under their eye, so magnificent is it, so heartening and tutorial, is enough.

It is not enough, of course, because it is not all there is. But it is something, it is a good deal, and John Wain has provided us a fine version of that good deal. In a prose decent, perspicuous and confident of its unshowy virtues he renders Johnson not more "human" than in some other biographies he was (we didn't need any more of *that*) but more actual. His success at this, as I've suggested, has partly to do with the play he makes with the likenesses and unlikenesses of his own case and Johnson's. The identification, at whatever distance, that Wain feels with Johnson is of course only a particular instance of the attraction that any biographer's subject should have for him. (And more remotely, the attraction the subject should have for the reader. We read the biographies of others, as we read obituaries, partly because we can never read our own.) But I think that that attraction operates with special force here. Among Johnson's contemporaries at Pembroke College the only one whose intellectual powers came near to daunting him was a certain finely named Jack Meeke, who plays a tiny, but to my mind emblematic, role in Wain's biography. " 'About the same time of life,' [Johnson] remarked to Warton, 'Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, Sir, see the difference of our literary characters.' " Professor of Poetry at Oxford though now he is, John Wain offers us in *Samuel Johnson* an essay not only on but in the virtues of not being Jack Meeke. But of course the Professor of Poetry is not Johnson either. We become Johnsonians partly because we are not Johnsonian enough. I suspect that for its author the composition of this biography was his honorable way of dealing with that universally shared defect.

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ROGER SALE

Huxley and Bennett, Bedford and Drabble

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE SOMEONE wanting to read a full-length biography just for its style or its story; if one could show that Izaak Walton's life of Sanderson were better than his life of Donne it would matter little because people pick up a biography because of its subject, not its author. Even Sybille Bedord's *Aldous Huxley* and Margaret Drabble's *Arnold Bennett* aren't likely to find new readers for their subjects, though they both may well serve an equally valuable purpose and recreate an audience.[1] Bennett and Huxley don't have many loyal fans, people who adore their work, avid readers of their lesser efforts, but thousands have read something of theirs, though often not much and not recently. These biographies can do what most criticism and analysis does not: send one back, to reread and read, to be reminded. Perhaps the major source of the success of each is that they were written out of love and admiration, not because the job happened not to have been done, not to achieve status or promotion for the biographer. Bedford knew Huxley, and loved him, and she was the choice of his widow, brother, and son to write an official life. For her part, Drabble says "So I wrote the biography in a partisan spirit, as an act of appreciation." These motives can kill as well as any other, but in these cases they seem to have sustained and guided the biographer over the years of dogged laboring. Bedford and Drabble, themselves authors of novels of intelligent love, love their subjects intelligently, and it makes all the difference in the world. Both books are flawed, both suffer from that biographical compulsion to tell all. Drabble's book is too long, Bedford's is much too long—worse, *Aldous Huxley,* which was published in two volumes in England, appears here as a single book so large it is impossible actually to want to open it. In each case, the trouble is not the length as such but the effect that the length has on the biographer's control over her material and on her final view of the subject. Still, each does its essential job, each makes biography into an enabling act, and Drabble at her best makes it a noble art as well.

Bedford's *Huxley* takes its shape from reminiscence. By 1930 Huxley had written the satirical novels for which he still probably is most admired; he was a husband and a father, established as a writer, thirty-six, partially blind, a Huxley and an Arnold both and gradually becoming aware of the effects of having had such ancestors and such traditions behind him. At this point, living in the south of France, he met Sybille Bedford, and we are on p. 232. The remaining years, which most people think of as the

[1] ALDOUS HUXLEY, by *Sybille Bedford*. Knopf/Harper & Row. $15.00. ARNOLD BENNET, by *Margaret Drabble*. Knopf. $10.00.

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California years, the Huxley of fads and causes, take Bedford another 509 pp. The book is not Bedford's memoirs, or anything like that, but still, the Huxley she knew is the one she wants to write about. The early years she deals with in scraps and vignettes, done rather as she does her small scenes in her novels; years go by very quickly, and one watches in dismay as a full grown Huxley is etched in without our having any very clear sense of what he was like, how he came about. For a book this long and full, the early pace seems hurried, fitful, and it isn't until later on that Bedford, as if pleased somehow to have gotten Huxley to the point where she first knew him, slows down, fills in, and by this time the Huxley that many, and perhaps most, of her readers most want to know about is all gone by.

Nor are the difficulties over then. Perhaps the best way to indicate Bedford's stance is with an example. It is 1937, and she is describing a London dentist:

> On Monday morning Aldous went to his surgery. I wish I could recall his name because, as I repeat, he was a very pleasant man, but more to the point proved to be an extremely competent and up-to-date dentist. It was Tregar or something near it. He discovered abscesses at the roots and had to extract three more teeth. The whole job was done brilliantly; Aldous was very pleased and recovered quickly.

Some will not like such a manner no matter what; it is breezy, absorbed with trivia, and the biographer is intrusive. Maybe; though I, for one, am not dismayed. But then, fifteen years and two hundred pages later, we have this in a footnote:

> "The very pleasant young man," whom I called T., who was Aldous and Maria's neighbour at the Mount Royal Hotel in London during that spring and who rescued Aldous from the consequences of the botched operation on his jaw in Paris, did not entirely agree with the article and said so to Aldous. Aldous told T., who is of course Mr. Boris Trainin, the Harley Street dental consultant and analytical psychologist. . . .

Between the first and the second volume as they appeared in England, Bedford found out who T., or Tregar, was. Again, some may object that she should then have done some tidying up, but we can let that pass and come right to the telltale and incriminating "of course": how stupid of me not to remember his name, "of course" we all know Boris Trainin, "the" Harley Street consultant.

Here, in miniature, is Bedford, the insider who too often and at too great length defines "the world" as Fielding said it was defined by people of fashion: "the people of one's acquaintance." Sybille Bedford lives in "the world," Aldous Huxley lived there, and "of course" so too does Boris Trainin. Bedford evokes names and places as though they were all perfectly familiar; she discusses houses and furniture and domestic habits or servants and mealtimes as though of course these are as important as

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any but the few really important things in life. Most important, she treats Maria Huxley as though she were as important as Huxley himself, because many who knew them both felt she was, and because Bedford wants to tell those for whom she seemed less important that that was only because Maria was such a beautiful arranger. At its tacky worst, we get this, Maria's handling of Aldous' affairs with other women:

> The logistics were largely Maria's. "You can't leave it to Aldous," she would say, "he'd make a muddle." She did it with tact, unbreachable good manners and a smile (ironic). She sent the flowers. Not actual flowers, that wouldn't have been Aldous's style, she saw to it that he sent a book. This he might inscribe with an elegantly turned allusive stanza of her own composition (in French: he still enjoyed *d'être un peu scabreux*). Maria did up the parcel. She did more than that. In a very subtle way she prepared the ground, created opportunities, an atmosphere, stood in, as it were, for the courtship. . . . She did not really mind, Maria took what I should call the aristocratic view of sex.

I suppose this is amusing, and Bedford brings it off pretty well, but one is far from nodding "of course" to the idea that Maria's arranging of Aldous' affairs is a mark of her "unbreachable good manners." Worse, though Bedford is willing to say what she can about these affairs, she will not make an effort to bring the sexual life of the Huxleys into focus, so one is left with: after the birth of their son, the Huxleys could have no more children; after that, Aldous had affairs that Maria helped arrange. Is that all one knows or needs to know? Bedford should either have told more or less, should not have left the Huxleys seeming grossly naive and impossible, Maria in her "aristocratic view of sex," Aldous in his dinner and bed with various women whenever he got to England.

Yet Bedford has many virtues of which these are the defects. She *is* a woman of the world, an aristocrat of sorts, an accomplished novelist and a skilled reporter. Having chosen to include the entire Huxley acquaintance, perhaps so no one's feelings might be hurt, she manages the cast with great skill and tact. She is able to show the attractions and shortcomings of people as diverse as brother Julian Huxley, Frieda Lawrence, and guru Gerald Heard; she shuffles the quotations from letters and memoirs in and out with great skill. And, unless one is overwhelmed by the sheer profusion of detail, she offers a very precise way to see parts of Huxley. Start with whatever image the satires of the twenties give of their author, add the bit above about the affairs. Now this, Bedford's description of the Huxleys in California as she saw them in the summer of 1940:

> I found Aldous and Maria very changed. There was of course Aldous's new sight—there he was without his spectacles, walking, reading (still holding the print close to his eyes), but this was not as impressive as it might have been because of his looking so drawn and strained, like a man with a great burden of unhappiness severely locked away. I had often seen him look ill or withdrawn or quietly sad, but even during the

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> great insomnia of 1935 he had always kept his air of equanimity. . . . It was of course a deeply unhappy time for most of us, but it seemed to me that the Huxleys were almost deliberately, if not consciously, putting themselves under the greatest possible strain, submitting themselves to some rigorous process of repression; a process, I thought even then, that must have been of longer standing, must have ante-dated the catastrophic news of the last weeks.

The move to America had not released Huxley, and for all his productivity his work had done little to help himself, "the world," or the world as a whole. Bedford's picture is just what is needed to show a man approaching a crisis, though when one has become as adept at repression as Huxley, the crisis may be both long in coming and long in working itself out.

The article Huxley had written that Boris Trainin had not liked was on hypnosis; his eyesight had been much improved with the help of the "professionally" not entirely creditable Bates method; in the years before 1940 Huxley was deeply involved with Gerald Heard in the Peace Pledge Union. Huxley had been getting "into" things that others, many of his friends included, find to be fads or boltholes for neuroses. When Bedford saw him in 1940, nothing had helped, except the Bates method. And Huxley went on getting "into" things: massage, occultism, seances, parapsychology, educational theory, Eastern philosophy and religion, global thinking and ecology, LSD and mescalin. Those who like to think so can claim that all Huxley needed was the move to Los Angeles to bring out all his naive susceptibility to any cause or cure.

Bedford tells another story. Huxley knew he was a "sensitive if underemotional man," knew he wanted to change his life, knew he could not repudiate his intelligence, rationality, and irony even had he wanted to. Three books, none near the top of most people's Huxleyan Parnassus, tell the story: *Grey Eminence* (1941), a biography of Father Joseph, a devout priest who became Richelieu's chief henchman; *The Devils of Loudon* (1952), a study of an episode of fanaticism, exorcism, and sanctity; *The Doors of Perception* (1954), a little book about Huxley's first experiments with mescalin. Taken together with Bedford's account of these years, Huxley's efforts to wash away the aridity of his life, to open its repression, to overcome if not eradicate his lack of natural piety, are absorbing and moving. He tried so many different things because nothing by itself worked, and the more he worked the more he saw he had to do. "Now the treasure [in Aldous] is flowing in torrents of gaiety and openness," Maria wrote in 1952, and if that overstates its point, it does not misplace the emphasis. "It's a bit embarrassing to find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than 'Try to be a little kinder,' " Huxley said some years later, and if that understates the point, it too does not misplace the emphasis. Lawrence had said many years before that there were many nicer Huxleys than the one who had written *Point Counter Point,* but that knowledge was more available to Lawrence than to Huxley himself; it wasn't until years after *Point Counter Point* that he could begin to be

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someone truly different, less measuring, less mottled with meanness of spirit. He went on working hard at living his life, at trying to accept a self he did not like, and the effort is impressive.

Bedford offers all the evidence one needs, pours out vignettes, stitches quotations, and comments skillfully, but I wish she had insisted more that to love Huxley was not just to love his efforts during these later years but to admire and applaud his successes. Bedford, creature of the European "world," seems at times a little too worried that we might associate her with Taoism, or seances, or drugs, and there is no need for that. For me, and I hope for others, she makes the later Huxley a fine man, a struggler rather than a pilgrim, and I think she could have endorsed the efforts more strongly and decisively had she insisted that what was important was the work, not the goals. She never loses sight of Huxley, but she lets herself be content with chronicling where she should have been a decisive storyteller. Still, I liked the book much more than I thought I would, given its length, given the falling off before this in Bedford's own career, given my inability ever to warm to Huxley. And those three books of the forties and early fifties that I mentioned earlier really should have more readers.

Arnold Bennett, on the other hand, is someone I have always felt warmly about; so too is Margaret Drabble, though I hadn't realized until now that perhaps the sources of these warm feelings were similar. Bennett was from Stoke-on-Trent, Drabble is from Sheffield, and while both eagerly left home and never wished to return, Bennett in his major novels and Drabble (in part by her reading of those novels) realized the hold these industrial midlands cities still had on them. There is a moment, in *The Summer Bird-Cage,* I think, when a Drabble heroine at a party or a fancy London pub finds herself thinking that the real London is not where she is but in the Long Acre, where the fruit and veg people work. Most of Bennett's life was like that; he wanted to be at the party, on the yacht, in the nightclub dancing, but real life, he knew, was elsewhere, in the Five Towns, in the Long Acre, or Sheffield. When Drabble discovered these qualities in herself, she knew how much Bennett had articulated them for her, and in this book she wants to pay homage to what he did for her and others like her. Given the special nature of Bennett's life—a hugely industrious (one almost wants to say industrialized) writer, immensely successful and quite wealthy, yet able to write at his best only about his grim home county—biography hardly seems the right form. The farther he got from the Five Towns, the more he enjoyed himself, the kinder he may have become, but the less there is to say about him. Drabble realizes this, says at the outset she will concentrate on "Bennett's background, his childhood and origins," which she does, but still, the great things here are all in the first part. After Bennett becomes a public success Drabble keeps at it, but it is work, for her and her reader. Until then, however, she does magnificently. It is like a Bennett novel, warm and detailed, rich in its sense of the past, unstinting in his exposure of meannesses and failings, yet fully assured that the truth will set free both subject and biographer.

The great mark of Drabble's assurance is her almost total lack of needless self-consciousness. She knows all her material is relevant

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somehow, and trusts it, so that the early chapters are filled with commentary on *The Old Wives' Tale* and the *Clayhanger* trilogy, used as illuminations of places, people, and feelings of Bennett's life; she knows, and so never needs to question, the way art is and isn't life, the way Bennett is and isn't Edwin Clayhanger, his father is and isn't Darius Clayhanger, his mother is and isn't Auntie Hamps. Likewise, she knows her own life is relevant here and brings it in easily and gracefully, again in perfect trust that she is right to do so. Because the result is so very much like one of Bennett's novels, which rely on accumulation of detail and so are practically impossible to quote from tellingly, I can only hope a couple of quotations can hint how it all works. First this, about Bennett's mother:

> She must, like most wives in this district at this time, have been much subdued; certainly she had none of the troublesome "superior" qualities which Lawrence's mother possessed, and which produced many of the conflicts which turned him into a writer. Bennett owes her no such doubtful debt. She may have been ambitious for him, but she didn't show it. Arnold was to remain an attentive and affectionate son—for years he wrote to her every day and sent a constant flow of postcards, on one occasion (31 August 1904) sending as many as seven postcards on the same day. No wonder he criticizes the neglect of the feckless Cyril Povey, in *The Old Wives' Tale,* who forgets to write home.

The equipoise is admirable:: "subdued" playing off against "troublesome," in ways that raise a problem without trying to settle it; the simple shift from "Bennett" to "Arnold" as the writer turns for a moment into the son; the glance at Cyril Povey that shows how passages in novels come to be written in ways that otherwise are not accountable. Now this, much later, about the death of Auntie Sarah Hamps in *These Twain,* a scene written shortly after the death of Bennett's mother:

> The death of Auntie Hamps is magnificently described: it is, as Bennett makes us well aware, the death of an era. Thrifty Auntie Hamps, who wore black silks, jet ornaments and seal-skins, had presented a glorious front to the world for years, but Edwin, in penetrating the defenceless fastness of her bedroom, finds all her "squalid avaricious secrets" revealed. Did he find his own mother's bedroom similarly squalid? Probably he did. Her appearance, her dying vagaries, her final meannesses about coal on the fire, her unwillingness to relinquish power, are all ruthlessly described: he has no pity on her. And even at the end, Edwin cannot help speculating on the conundrum at the heart of her being: did she really believe in her own hypocrisy or not? Did she actually believe in the God whose mottoes adorn her bedroom wall? Did those who spoke at her funeral actually believe she was a saint, and an absolutely irreparable loss to the circuit? There is no answer. The secrets of the bedroom can be exposed, but not the secrets and duplicities of the Wesleyan Methodist heart.

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The ruthlessness of hero and son and writer neither denies the affection nor the mystery; Drabble knows, Bennett knows, Edwin knows, that you can't prove that a Wesleyan Methodist is not a believer by exposing hypocrisies no matter how deeply ingrained; nor can you thereby cut off all love or loyalty you may feel for such a person.

These may not be the highest of novelistic truths just as Bennett himself may not be among the greatest of writers. No matter. What Drabble wants to do, what she succeeds admirably in doing, is to tell the story of the life so that it recreates the sources and circumstances of the major novels, and so that, in turn, the novels can do the same for the life; and she does this by implicitly insisting that we ask ourselves all over again the terms by which we value writers we may value more highly than Bennett. The major explicit comparison she asks us to draw is with Virginia Woolf, for obvious reasons. It was Woolf who put Bennett down in her famous speech about Mrs. Brown, and when he is put down to this day it is usually in Woolf's terms; it was Woolf who represented, or at least seems to represent, a standard of social awareness and sensitivity whereby Bennett could be judged as a provincial stammerer; it is her novels whose air of the importance of private intensity seems designed to make Bennett's seem external and thingy; it is Woolf about whom Drabble herself wrote movingly a few years ago, as a sign that she had finally come to see the virtues of a writer whose social class and novelistic manner had hitherto seemed to her remote and overrated.

The second half of *Arnold Bennett,* as I have said, is replete with details of Bennett's life and works that Drabble herself cannot pretend to care much about, and her defense of the later novels, with the exception of the finely done *Riceyman's Steps,* is ritualistic and tepid. So the comparison of Bennett and Woolf, when it comes, is especially welcome as a means of regaining a focus that has been only fitfully maintained:

> Which of them was worldly, which unworldly, Bennett with his yacht and his well-cut suit, Virginia with her snobbery and her migraines? Did she suspect the physical tension that had made Bennett suffer for most of his life, and did she in any way connect it with her own physical manifestations of neurosis? Both of them were highly strung, but his was the sensitivity of a deprived working-class child, not of an upper-class aesthete. Both were melancholic. How could Virginia Woolf have seen him as "coarse . . . glutted with success . . . a shopkeeper's view of literature . . . yet with the rudiments of sensibility. . . ." How could one ascribe to a man who had been rendered *inarticulate* by sensibility merely the rudiments of it? His stammer embodied, physically and unmistakably, his response to life, but she was incapable, through class, of seeing it as anything other than an impediment to his rather dull discourse.

Then, turning to a comparison of their works:

> She accuses him of being interested only in the externals of daily life: in fact he writes magnificently of the little movement of the spirit in its

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> daily routine, just as she does, of the soul within a drab housemaid's exterior. He accuses her of failing to invent character, but her characters—Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, Eleanor Pargiter—are as distinctive and enduring as his own. They both wrote of the inner dramas of ordinary events—a holiday, a marriage, a child's sufferings in an adult world; they were both adept at social comedy. But there was something in her, some really fundamental recoil from groceries and shops, that blinded her appreciation of both his subject matter and of his meaning. Her recoil was an involuntary movement of class. She did not like the *nouveau riche*. The sensitivity manifested in a stammer, in insomnia, in gastric disorders, was something she could not translate into her own terms.

Finely said, finally said. Drabble is of course on Bennett's side, but she knows what the other side is about even as she stresses its limits.

As I hope the quotations show, Drabble's great virtue is her way of making Bennett a novelist, a man most alive in his fictions, without using biography simply as a coatrack for criticism, so that her plea for a kind of fiction is also her plea for a kind of human being. Bennett could be extremely artful, but he had no art, and only the most simple kind of professional guile; in addition, after he had found his métier in a few novels, he could not sustain it because the life of the Five Towns did not continue to interest him, even as memory. He was cut off from his past and never tried, as Aldous Huxley did, to break the mold of his life after it had once been formed, and he could not, as Trollope did, go on writing one big novel after another because of the terms his life established. So be.

A further comparison between Bennett and Huxley, along the lines Drabble offers for one between Bennett and Woolf, is not without merit. The great virtue of Huxley, as I see it, is that, born with all the advantages, suffering therefrom, he sought to alter the terms of his life, to make himself not only a better person but a somewhat different one, and in doing this he did not so much repudiate his Huxley-Arnold-Oxford past as severely place its limits and continue to use its rationality as a check against folly. Throughout his life he was a professional writer, and during his last thirty years a sufficiently successful one that he could live more or less as he pleased. But he has no masterpiece, no work or group of works one can turn to and say "There." His early novels, although immensely clever and witty, are not only a little thin and dated, but really mean-spirited, sometimes in ways Huxley recognized, sometimes in ways he did not. The essays are terribly good as occasional pieces, and one can read most of the *Collected Essays* with pleasure, but, unless I'm mistaken, there's not a one that can be said to be truly decisive. I've not read more than half the total corpus, but I would expect to find even his most offhand things to be of some interest and even his most seriously thought-out works to be distressingly inarticulate in final effect. So too it is, and perhaps for that very reason, with Sybille Bedford's biography; the book is so long because Huxley's was an interesting life; but the life finally seemed not to have shape, and so Bedford let the book spin out, intelligent, well-written, but never quite in focus.

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Bennett, on the other hand, with all the disadvantages and suffering therefrom, the man from the north who successfully became a London hack and man of the theatre, might have been only that, exploiting his intelligence in thin, impersonal, lucrative ways, had he not somehow continued to see himself as someone who was fascinated with the world he had left. Drabble rightly sees *Anna of the Five Towns* of 1902, five years after his first novel and thirteen after he had gone to London, as crucial; it isn't very good, but it was his first novel about home, and the remarks of his London friends convinced Bennett they could not see the passion he knew he had created in the little dramas of the Tellwright family. He was of the midlands still, able to use all the distance London had given him to see how to celebrate that fact; the result was *The Old Wives' Tale* and the *Clayhanger* books, and one can point to them and say "There." One reason is that there is not a breath of mean-spiritedness in them; the life of the Five Towns, of Constance Povey, Edwin Clayhanger, and Hilda Lessways is too confined and Bennett too repressed for them to rank with the greatest novels, but they are irreplaceable, wonderfully rereadable books. Margaret Drabble therefore could come from the north two generations later, go to Cambridge, become a fine novelist, and use the distance that gave her to pay her homage to her forbear. *Arnold Bennett,* thus, has a centrality of purpose, an illumination of conviction and intent, that makes it a finer book than *Aldous Huxley.*

A final note. At this writing, in this country almost any book by Huxley one might want is still in print, and not one of Bennett's better or best books is. Since most reprinting is tied to the college and university market, one presumes that not even *The Old Wives' Tale* is being taught. A shame; one could make a long list of much worse books that haven't suffered thus. One feels inclined, in such circumstances, to congratulate Harper & Row for doing so well by Huxley.

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J. E. CHAMBERLIN

Poetry and Confidence

IN THE COURSE OF HIS PLEASANTLY ANTIPHONAL "Collect of Philosophy," Wallace Stevens claims that poetry and philosophy have in common "the idea of creating confidence in the world," and he nods towards some lines by Jean Paulhan about

> la confiance que le poète fait naturellement—
> et nous invite à faire—au monde.

According to Stevens, such confidence is a product of "the habit of forming concepts," or of "probing for an integration" with the ordering mind. It is also the achievement which poetry and philosophy anxiously require if they are to supply the satisfactions which they advertise.

Contemporary poetry, in particular, is always in something of a crisis in this respect, for its confidences demand a commitment to modern concepts (the product of self-consciously modern habits of mind) of which we may not be entirely aware. The task of the critic is then a particularly difficult one: on behalf of the poet, he invites us on a quest for our modern self; and on behalf of the reader, he instructs us in how to recognize it, often using the concepts of the philosopher to construct a kind of "identikit." And yet it is surely not surprising when this truant modern self that we seek is not at home when we step outside our modern house and ring our modern doorbell. It is a wonder that we entertain such nonsense at all, we mutter, as we become more adept at recognizing the predicament. Often, the quest for the self is then transposed into a question about the self, as the critic turns to a more manageable and catechetic tradition, and tries to instruct us in key patterns which will discover to us our modern habits of mind and make available the kind of confidence that self-consciousness inspires. The question that is implied by this transposition is, then, "Who am I?," this modern self that the poet touches; and if one is interested in a national literature, the question may take a related form, such as "Where is here?" Both questions are riddles of an especially perplexing sort, and the dilemma which they create in the minds of those to whom they are addressed is a consequence of the paradox which they embody.

Now paradox is a curious invention. As a verbal performance it can be remarkably effective, for it appeals to the same imaginative response as metaphor, and, like metaphor, it obliterates the possibility of any rational response. The modern critic, who would create confidence in a world in which metaphor and paradox reign, decides that he must in some sense recreate that world. And so he uses metaphorical structures to define the conditions of his inquiry, and in doing so he makes severe demands. For metaphors are hard task-masters, and force us to balance on the swaying tight-rope of our culture's and our age's aesthetic and social norms . . . or, more exactly, on those upon which the metaphor-maker insists. We are at

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his mercy, and we risk being drummed out of the ranks if we do not step, or dance, to his tune. He is, no doubt, the supreme legislator of his world, and our freedoms are those which are defined by his supreme fiction. This is, ultimately, the role that the critic would play. "Probing for an integration," to use Stevens' phrase, the critic affects a fortuitous deliberation, and intends a fateful effectiveness.

Calvin Bedient is a confidence man with the best of intentions, and with a pocketful of paradoxes. He is addicted to the habit of forming concepts, and to a style which is infuriatingly coy, full of easy contrasts and fashionably enigmatic inversions, structured according to the demands of metaphor and metaphysics, and constructed partly out of the deliberate probings and fateful integrations of a numbing array of philosophers. On the other hand, Bedient's real interest is quite clearly not in philosophy but in poetry, and in its fortuitous probings and effective integrations: in this case, in the poetry of Charles Tomlinson, Donald Davie, R. S. Thomas, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, Thomas Kinsella, Stevie Smith, and W. S. Graham—*Eight Contemporary Poets*.[1] The confidence that Bedient dispenses is in a world, the world which his book celebrates. It is a place nervously modern, and a time of fragile accommodations, when language—poised at the intersection of sound, image and meaning—is more than usually uncertain of its further direction. Bedient does not quite know how to talk about it, but then not knowing how to talk about it is after all the final cause of poetry criticism. The critic must recognize this, however, just as the poet must, at the end of the process of creation, recognize the finished poem as the cause of its beginning. Bedient is himself too confident in the wrong sort of way, too certain that he is a good reader of poetry. To be sure, he *is* a good reader; but his book is much the poorer for the absence of the kind of agitated and paradoxical distrust of its own accomplishments that characterizes the modern sensibility he is trying to catalogue.

His book begins badly, with Bedient in his epigonal manner assuring us that Charles Tomlinson "beholds . . . (his subjects') beholding. He is thus himself once removed—though, in another sense, also himself twice over . . . And though (his sensibility) comes for grace, it comes also like a grace." There is truth in this perhaps, but the mannerism is unrelated to the tensions which are Bedient's real subject, and therefore unrelated to the confidence which he offers to us, for the paradoxes which it flaunts are trivial and avoidable, and mock the binding anguish which the language of modern poetry displays.

Furthermore, Bedient's infatuation with what he calls the "temperate and chaste" quality of Tomlinson's poetry becomes a compulsive standard against which many of his loveliest pieces cannot usefully be measured. For one thing, Bedient will not permit himself to cherish the sternly delicate insincerity of some of Tomlinson's later poems, particularly those in *Written on Water*. And yet he does recognize and write perceptively about Tomlinson's dread of the spiritual obliteration

[1] EIGHT CONTEMPORARY POETS, by *Calvin Bedient*. Oxford University. $11.95.

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represented by the concepts of space and silence, and about his instinct for self-preservation which asserts itself in an urgent abstracting of form and design, wherein *Seeing* is *Believing* because both are dependent upon the self and its certainties. Like Wordsworth, Tomlinson "watches and receives" with a poet's hungry need for spiritual sustenance, and in his creativity he is "fostered alike by beauty and by fear." His poetry is characterized by a humble receptiveness, and individual poems chronicle with Comus-like delight the maintaining of his imaginative purity. He affects a Wordsworthian uncertainty about "whether it were by peculiar grace,/A leading from above, a something given," but when "A Given Grace" does come, the poet is ready. Bedient worries about this cycle, and about the confusion of passivity and activity which Tomlinson achieves; he displays a mixed response to its specific charms in individual poems, and is best at discussing its more general implications.

> The truth is that, beyond the discrepancy between what the poems say and what they are, yawns the still greater discrepancy between what they say and the fact that they are. Let them set nature before us as a sufficient spiritual end; still, their very existence as poetry, their very excess over nature, suggests that it is art, and not nature, that cures the ache of being. As both the beholder and poet of nature Tomlinson is twice the contemplative; and just in that apparent superfluity, it seems, lies the fullness that the spirit requires.

The consequent paradox that the poems "speak, as it were, in ignorance of themselves" is what Tomlinson has relished throughout his career. His poems are genuinely "occasional," songs of celebration of something other than themselves. It is an indication of Bedient's right instinct here that his analysis of Tomlinson's work applies as properly to his latest volume (*The Way In*) as it does to his earlier ones.

With Donald Davie, Bedient feels more comfortable, and he launches into the major argument of his book—a discussion of poetry and verse, and of the language of poetry and that of prose. Though Davie is an obvious subject with which to begin such a discussion, I find myself quickly back once again with Wordsworth, which is rather ironic, since Bedient is at pains to establish that both Tomlinson and Davie belong in a classical (as opposed to a romantic) tradition. (Of Tomlinson, he notes that he is not a romantic poet because he "discovers the nature of nature." I am not so sure of these easy categories. Coleridge may not have discovered it, but he certainly wrote a lot about it.) Still, modern poets are not supposed to write lyrical ballads (though they do), any more than Coleridge and Wordsworth were supposed to write imitative odes (though they did). And Bedient is not happy that Davie seems to be wasting his formidable talents on verse, and in the language of prose . . . on "a half-hearted desire for beauty" in "the interest of moral perfection and truth." But this is ap-

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parently appalling, for "beauty, of course, is all-consuming, or it is nothing; there is no such thing as the half-beautiful." What verse can be, we are told, is apt. (Bedient bolsters this with another of his interminable epigrams: "If art is praise, as Rilke and others have said, then verse is criticism." It is not even worth disputing, except perhaps to note—as a kind of defence of Davie—that praise can be very, very boring.)

Bedient uses these distinctions and some further strictures on the language of prose in his chapters on Ted Hughes and Stevie Smith as well, and in passing throughout the book. Hughes has said (of *Crow*) that he relinquished the "musically deeper world" of formal patterning "to speak a language that raises no ghosts"; Bedient adds that "in fact he mostly speaks prose, which is *all* ghost," though Hughes is praised for "*bursts* of prose in the stellar regions of poetry." And Smith is described as "so instinctively a dramatist of voice that she endows even the verse essay with necessity. And this is all the more remarkable in that her language is anyway that of a writer of verse. She remains almost always outside and above her words; they are smaller than she is, her instruments." The implied censure here is derived from R. G. Collingwood's timely discovery of the principles of art, and that "as soon as we take that notion of craft seriously, it is perfectly obvious that art proper cannot be any kind of craft." Although Bedient quotes Collingwood early in his study of Davie, the philosopher's fateful integrations inform the entire book. And since Bedient relies upon these distinctions so heavily, it would be helpful to have a specific analysis of what he is talking about when he speaks of verse "betraying a half-hearted desire for beauty," and "cling(ing) to the *form* of poetry as a prelate clings to a mistress—in spite of earnest intentions" or "lean(ing) longingly over the fence separating truth from beauty, caught by . . . the suspicion of a rite necessary to the soul." He plays at Walter Bagehot's game, and even quotes a passage from his notorious essay on "Pure, Ornate and Grotesque Art in English Poetry," but he does not appear to accept that to complain that "the burst of metre—incident to high imagination, should not be wasted upon matters . . . which prose does as well" is to avoid the central issue of the way in which metre matters, if it does at all. In addition, Bedient would have done well to return at least briefly to the form that this argument took in the early years of the nineteenth century, and most particularly in Wordsworth's *Prefaces* and in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. I mention this not out of pedantry, though that has its uses, but because Bedient's interest in this debate is specifically in the "interpenetration of image and spirit" which "beauty" accomplishes—the phrase is Hegel's, quoted by Bedient—and which Davie, for example, apparently eschews.

Now I have never been very easy with the concept of beauty, and I am even less comfortable now. But the English romantic poets thought a fair bit about it, and had their thinking focussed by a host of eighteenth-century writers on the subject, with interests as different as those of Edmund Burke, Joshua Reynolds and Erasmus Darwin. Of the poets, Shelley provided the most explicit formulation, taking the idea (from Aristotle)

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that "the good is that toward the possession of which an appetite tends; the good is the desirable, and the true and the beautiful are the most persistent orders of the desirable," and turning it into the assertion that "to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression." The entire matter is almost overwhelmingly confusing, but as one critic (Lawrence Lipking) has said of Reynolds, "the repeated definitions of the idea of beauty, the relentless syntactical striving for an adequate statement, convey better than any logic the urgent aspiration of the artist." Bedient has chosen to concentrate much of his attention on this idea, and on the artist's "urgent aspirations," yet he fails to convey much sense of the consubstantiality of thought and feeling which is at the centre of any discussion of this kind, and by which the poets of the Age of George III were fascinated. Furthermore, while poets may not always write with critical clarity, the philosophers whom Bedient relies upon—Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Bergson, Weil, among others—are stunningly obtuse, and (to be generous) bring to the matter a host of inimical assumptions and instincts, and too great a readiness to be final.

And so Bedient, despite his best intentions, becomes (to use Davie's phrase) "eloquent in pidgin," as he tries to be faithful both to his enthusiasms and to his own sensibility. For example, he writes that poetry is "fundamentally a phenomenon, not of egoism mixed with language, as Davie seems to believe, but, in Hegel's phrase, of life lifted 'above itself in the very language of life.' " But he has allowed himself to be trapped by the philosopher's deliberate and fateful phrase, and has left no room to recognize that this "lifting" may itself be accomplished by egoism, by the ordering imagination asserting itself against the real, by the mind transcending experience. I like many of Bedient's readings, and he is a sensitive critic, with a fierce commitment to the poet's contact with his world, and to the serious attention that this deserves. But he seems to be working too hard at his task, and he is too ready to turn to the philosophers for a new supply of truths, and a refill of the fanciest fuel.

He is in good form in his discussion of R. S. Thomas, a poet whose work is too little known. He comments with careful attention on Thomas' work as an expression of what Stanley Burnshaw has referred to as man's "drive to regain . . . his primary organic unity with the rest of creation: his 'seamlessness.' " This is, indeed, simply a new (and useful) way of saying that Thomas exhibits that "urge to empathy" that Theodor Lipps discussed at the end of the last century, and which distinguishes Thomas' work from the "urge to abstraction" that characterizes Tomlinson's sensibility. These two responses to experience are not exclusive, and what writers early in this century argued (for critical convenience) were polar opposites are really more like sides of a coin. Bedient does not use these categories in quite this way, though he does throw the words empathy and abstraction around throughout the book, but his commentary here is excellent.

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Yet poetry enacts seamlessness, I believe, only through a subtle perspective of detachment. By sleight of hand it makes us creatures again, but at the same time as abstract as Plato. If it puts us on a green hill, it also gives us space to see the hill rise, horizoned. It allows us to be at once as primal and civilized as the mind can be.

Thomas is a fine subject for these speculations; he has a splendidly Wordsworthian gauntness, and a gift for the kind of imagery that sustains the spirit, yet leaves it vulnerable.

> No, no, you must face the fact
> Of his long life alone in that crumbling house
> With winds rending the joints, and the grey rain's claws
> *Sharp in the thatch; of his work up on the moors*
> With the moon for candle, and the shrill rabble of stars
> Crowding his shoulders. For Twm was true to his fate . . .
> . . .
>
> and a fortnight gone
> Was the shy soul from the festering flesh and bone
> When they found him there, entombed in the lucid weather.

Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes both display in its extremest form that response which Stevens described in "The Noble Rider and The Sound of Words," and by means of which a violence from within protects (the poet) from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation; and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives. Bedient notes that "Hughes's 'wild rebellion' against nullity is, as Schopenhauer would put it, an 'irrational tendency.' It has no 'sufficient reason in the external world.' " But it most certainly has a necessary reason. While Larkin is more inclined to rely on the irony that (to play Bedient's game for a moment) Kierkegaard described as "an emancipation from the constraint imposed by the continuity of life," from time to time Hughes takes it to its ultimate stage, which Kierkegaard called the "contemplative," in which "irony attempts to mediate the discrete moments of experience, not in a higher unity but in a higher madness." Bedient refers to Hughes's "dogged essential probing," and yet although dogged it is not deliberate, and his integrations are not fateful but fatal, and therefore effective in that way.

> So Crow found Proteus—steaming in the sun.
> Stinking with sea-bottom growths
> Like the plug of the earth's sump-outlet.
> There he lay—belching quakily . . .

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Thomas Kinsella is presented as "a chaos in search of an order," and his poems as "singlehanded attempts to haul his existence into unity . . . ris(ing) from a nearly insurmountable interior isolation, from a scepticism of the social world so total that the poet seems all but lost in himself." The scheme is familiar, and as one moves through his book Bedient's reasons for choosing these eight poets become clearer, and his omissions (George MacBeth, say) become less surprising. Bedient detects a falling off in Kinsella's latest volume of *New Poems,* and I think he is right, though I do not think he has fallen as far, nor from as far. Still, his best poems, such as "A Country Walk" and "Downstream," exemplify what Bedient calls "a new kind of reflective poem, the modern poem of travel," and belong with Larkin's "Whitsun Weddings" and Graham's "The Nightfishing," and with the tone of the "Manscapes" of Tomlinson's *The Way In.*

Stevie Smith is such a delight that Bedient comes very near to saying little about her, though he rushes along with cheerful enthusiasm. On "The Lady of the Well-Spring," in particular, he is good, and gives a nice sense of the rites of initiation into the magically erotic world which welcomes Joan, a world startlingly similar to that into which the elf-maiden invited Kristin at the beginning of *Kristin Lavransdatter.* The magical is given its properly sceptical and sinister due by Smith, and "The Frog Prince" and "I had a dream" are among the finest explorations of that aspect of experience to be found in the literature of recent years.

Bedient finds himself caught in a final entanglement in his discussion of W. S. Graham, for he again makes the mistake of letting philosophy dictate concepts to him—in this case, he is perplexed by the idea of "appearance" and by Graham's volume *The White Threshold.* Graham is a finely self-conscious poet , aware of his elegiac sensibility, and of the silent spaces that the elegiac poet celebrates in his dark dialogues.

> This is no other place
> Then where I am, between
> This world and the next.
> Maybe I should expect
> To find myself only
> Saying that again
> Here now at the end.
> Yet over the great
> Gantries and cantilevers
> Of love, a sky, real and
> Particular is slowly
> Startled into light.

This sensibility informs all of Graham's work—"Listen. Put on morning./ Waken into falling light"—and his work has developed into a profound distrust of the only instruments available to him, a distrust which Wordsworth, the most elegiac and undramatic of English poets, expressed in eloquent dismay, and then transformed into the story of the Arab Quixote in Book Five of *The Prelude:*

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> Oh! why hath not the Mind
> Some element to stamp her image on
> In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
> Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
> Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

Bedient might have been better served in his discussion of Graham's response to "appearance" if he had turned not to Heidegger but to a "maniac's fond anxiety" which a poet clearly understands, and to which Bedient as clearly responds. Which brings us back to Tomlinson, who has a nervous fascination with appearances that breaks down in Graham, and who from his earliest attachment to the interests and sensibility of Wallace Stevens has given contemporary poetry an example of the kind of nervous confidence in its attainments and in its world that each of these eight poets uniquely displays, and that the poet has always celebrated.

> At first, the mind feels bruised.
> The light makes white holes through the black foliage
> Or mist hides everything that is not itself.
>
> But how shall one say so?—
> The fact being, that when the truth is not good enough
> We exaggerate. Proportions
>
> Matter. It is difficult to get them right.
> There must be nothing
> Superfluous, nothing which is not elegant
> And nothing which is if it is merely that.
>
> This green twilight has violet borders.
>
> Yellow butterflies
> Nervously transferring themselves
> From scarlet to bronze flowers
> Disappear as the evening appears.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Larkin Lives

ON PUBLICATION OF PHILIP LARKIN'S last book of poems, *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), A. Alvarez put him in a place where, in the minds of some readers, he has remained for the last ten years: "In order to write well Larkin has deliberately turned his back on what he calls 'unfenced existence'. . . . He has chosen instead a kind of suburban hermitage, with plenty of books and records, bottled beer in the cupboard and all mod. con. On the wall is a poker-work motto which reads 'You'll never have it any better.' " Very poetic of Alvarez, and it is unlikely he would take it all back on the evidence of Larkin's new book;[1] but all wrong too. Maybe Hull, England, is your idea of a suburban hermitage, and I'm sure Larkin has put together a decent book-and-record collection, as who wouldn't, given the taste and cash. There may even be some bottled beer in his cupboard—though not in his poems. But the poker-work motto is pure Alvarez and too much a reviewer's *trouvaille* for the good of the poet whom it makes sound cozily resigned to, wearily accepting of a limited world where one can at least be at home. *High Windows* should jolt those who think this is where Larkin lives; but its reception in America so far may serve rather to confirm the clichés of gutsy poetry lovers who know where real life is and assume that boldness, range or daring are incompatible with Larkin's poetic measurements.

To be fair to Alvarez, his review contained within it a remark that if taken seriously enough might have disposed of the "limited"-"mod. con." way of understanding Larkin: "What keeps Larkin's verse alive is his feeling for the life he never quite had, the life of chance and risk, marriage and movement." Try this out on the verse of another highly-regarded contemporary English poet, Ted Hughes: what keeps Hughes's verse alive is his feeling for the life he never quite had, the life of wind and rain, animals and the elements. Or, what keeps T. S. Eliot's verse alive is his feeling for the life he never quite had at Faber & Faber—apocalypse, annihilation and reconstitution. My point is simply that chance, risk, movement—and marriage—are the life of Larkin's poems, and that whether "he " ever quite had them (he is not married and doesn't travel) both isn't and is exactly the point. The road not taken is also the one kept in the imagination, and that has made all the difference.

Yet critical attitudes towards Larkin haven't shifted any more in their perspectives than have the poems. Calvin Bedient in his recent *Eight Contemporary Poets* is admiring of Larkin's poetry but feels compelled to be "lively" about his supposedly depressed subject-poet: "Not that Larkin has wholly a mind of winter. A neighbourly snowman, he sometimes wears his hat tipped jauntily, and smiles and makes you laugh. Notice the drooping carrot nose. . ." If I were the recipient of praise such as this I

[1] HIGH WINDOWS, by *Philip Larkin*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.75.

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would feel it necessary to respond, in the words of one of the best new poems from *High Windows,* "In a pig's arse, friend." Bedient has the notion that Larkin is a "nihilist" comparable to the likes of Barthelme, Lowell, Beckett and Pinter; but that unlike those fellows—full of "emotional and technical protest" as they are—old Philip is "plain and passive," the "weakling" or the "pacifist. . . who never stands up to the niggling heart of existence." So Bedient pats him on the back—"More sophisticated writers have chided him for his poetic provinciality [who has?] but he is right, I think, to be as simple as he is." And Bedient's review of *High Windows* accuses Larkin of "force-feeding" his pity, calls the poems "bashes of sympathy" and opines that "Reading him is like being stroked during a bereavement."

Who would guess from such knowing and patronizing prose that Bedient has got his subject quite backwards, that the real Philip Larkin sounds like this in the poem "Vers de Société" from which I just quoted a line:

> *My wife and I have asked a crowd of craps*
> *To come and waste their time and ours: perhaps*
> *You'd care to join us?* In a pig's arse, friend.
> Day comes to an end.
> The gas fire breathes, the trees are darkly swayed.
> And so *Dear Warlock-Williams: I'm afraid—*

Not as much "emotional and technical protest" as Don Barthelme or Hal Pinter? The scornful invitation-rejector then begins to medidate:

> Funny how hard it is to be alone.
> I could spend half my evenings, if I wanted,
> Holding a glass of washing sherry, canted
> Over to catch the drivel of some bitch
> Who's read nothing but *Which;*
> Just think of all the spare time that has flown
>
> Straight into nothingness by being filled
> With forks and faces, rather than repaid
> Under a lamp, hearing the noise of wind,
> And looking out to see the moon thinned
> To an air-sharpened blade.

Who is this man? He talks nasty, refers to someone as a bitch (surely a bad sign), is "unfair" in his caricature of washing sherry and *Which,* but is also extraordinarily imaginative about what it's like to read under a lamp, or listen to the wind, or see the moon vividly—just so long as he's left alone. The complacent poem would of course end with this man, having told off Dear Warlock-Williams, contemplating that moon and congratulating himself on his marvelous sensitivity. Larkin's instead begins to argue with itself, eventually to the point where the meditator breaks off with an "Oh hell" and concludes:

> Only the young can be alone freely.
> The time is shorter now for company,

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> And sitting by a lamp more often brings
> Not peace, but other things.
> Beyond the light stand failure and remorse
> Whispering *Dear Warlock-Williams: Why, of course—*

Anyone who has tried reading late by himself when it didn't quite work out, when that trivial gathering up the next street one had decided to spurn suddenly looms as life-giving, knows that this poem doesn't speak from or for "nihilism" or "passivity"—or the security of bottled beer in the cupboard—but out of fully human response, painfully scrupulous and daringly capacious in its recognition, in the midst of an experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible. Larkin, like Marvell, is the poet of wit.

And tough reasonableness underneath a more than slight lyric grace too. Larkin's truculence is perhaps more overt in the new book, although it was there earlier in poems like "Poetry of Departures" from *The Less Deceived* or "Self's the Man" from *The Whitsun Weddings*. Invariably this truculence gets worked over into something else—as in "Vers de Société" the "crowd of craps"-"pig's arse" tough-talk is (it turns out) a lively front for the sense of failure and remorse which, though understood for what it is, stands behind the voice's final acquiescence to Warlock-Williams' blandishments. Larkin's poetry is the better for being able to express truculence and exasperation and childish stirrings:

> So to hear it said
>
> *He walked out on the whole crowd*
> Leaves me flushed and stirred,
> Like *Then she undid her dress*
> Or *Take that you bastard;*
> Surely I can, if he did?
>
> ("Poetry of Departures")

And talk about him as the sad snowman of winter, nose pressed as it were against the sweet-shop window of life, ignores the vigorous, unresigned and unaccepting current flowing through his best poems.

That current is felt preeminently in the most unforgettable poem of this new volume, indeed the poem I have found hardest to shake, or turn into "literature," of any encountered over the past few years. Here, in an ample stanzaic frame, is the opening of "The Old Fools":

> What do they think has happened, the old fools,
> To make them like this? Do they somehow suppose
> It's more grown-up when your mouth hangs open and drools,
> And you keep on pissing yourself, and can't remember
> Who called this morning? Or that, if they only chose,
> They could alter things back to when they danced all night,
> Or went to their wedding, or sloped arms some September?
> Or do they fancy there's really been no change,
> And they've always behaved as if they were crippled or tight,

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Or sat through days of thin continuous dreaming
Watching light move? If they don't (and they can't), it's strange:
Why aren't they screaming?

In his review, Calvin Bedient uses these lines as example of how Larkin works up a subject "as an occasion for softened feeling. Of course the old do not 'suppose It's more grown-up' to drool; it is Larkin who makes them pitiable fools"; and Bedient even has the gall to compare Larkin with Rod McKuen and Leonard Cohen—"his liability is sentimentality." But the sentimentality and inaccuracy is again Bedient's; for of course "Larkin," just like Bedient or any reasonable man, *knows* that the old don't confuse grown-upness with drooling, nor does the poem's final voice confuse them. But, as with "Vers de Société," the voice which begins a poem in angry expostulation ("In a pig's arse, friend") or callously-flippantly guys old people for "pissing themselves" is itself a momentary indulgence, tough-baby talk in the face of life's insults to the spirit. As the poem develops, "Larkin's" response to the old fools deepens, complicates, rises to lyric apostrophe, profundity even:

Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms
Inside your head, and people in them, acting.
People you know, yet can't quite name; each looms
Like a deep loss restored, from known doors turning,
Setting down a lamp, smiling from a stair, extracting
A known book from the shelves; or sometimes only
The rooms themselves, chairs and a fire burning,
The blown bush at the window, or the sun's
Faint friendliness on the wall some lonely
Rain-ceased midsummer evening. That is where they live:
Not here and now, but where all happened once.

And it continues through the final stanza with an ever-mounting, controlled intensity of utterance until its chilling ending: "Well/We shall find out."

It is wrong then to speak as if the poet's truest self were instantly revealed by his poem's opening gambit, as if the librarian of the University at Hull were instantly brought before our eyes, shocking the other librarians by using rough language. To imagine old age as both more awful and unimaginably more strange than one had thought seems to me quite the opposite of sentimentality, but rather what the poet—who feels more, and more deeply than ordinary men—can't help doing. Larkin has insisted that poems should be written out of strong feelings, that the man who suffers is pretty much continuous with the mind that creates: what then was all the Eliotic modernist fuss about? It can't be denied that at moments reading Larkin one asks exactly that, reassuring oneself that poems issuing out of strong feeling, written in lucid and elegant phrase, compacted in a syntax of complexity and variety, and about nothing more than life, death, England, nature, sex, money—that this is what really the fuss should have been about all along.

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High Windows is 24 poems in all, which to my calculations comes to about 26 cents a poem, but worth it since they are to be read and reread, especially read aloud late at night, and in the words of Kingsley Amis, as accompaniment to the final Scotch. Most of these poems read aloud are indeed exhilarating and though they can be used as aids to self-pity, as sublime, sour-grapes cheering up of oneself, they are richer than that. (Not that there's anything wrong with a little late-night self-pity which keeps you quiet, out of the harm's way of others, and when taken out on a poem—or Scotch—almost feels like friendship. How many contemporary poets could be of use in this way? Precious few.) Perhaps the most commonly available of such aids involves the oldster thinking about age, as when in "Sad Steps" ("Groping back to bed after a piss") he looks out at the moon, the sky, and concludes that

> One shivers slightly, looking up there.
> The hardness and the brightness and the plain
> Far-reaching singleness of that wide stare
>
> Is a reminder of the strength and pain
> Of being young; that it can't come again,
> But is for others undiminished somewhere.

Larkin's favorite poet, Hardy, expressed it more sententiously at the end of his fine late poem "The Missed Train" in which the man remembers back to a time when he had to stop over at a station inn and spent the night lonely, yet consoled by the spirit of his just-visited love. He thinks now of how far away it all is, then muses

> But such happenings to-day
> Fall to lovers, may be!
>
> Years, years as shoaled seas
> Truly, stretch now between! Less and less
> Shrink the visions then vast in me.—Yes,
> Then in me: Now in these.

"The strength and pain/Of being young" is imagined by Hardy out of a different but continuous strength and pain of being old and having been young. Perhaps Larkin's plangent strains here too seductively beckon the weaker part of ourselves, by contrast to Hardy's sepulchral tones which sound like the voice of God, thus can't be "identified" with. Still, and again, who else could write those last words about being young—"that it can't come again,/But is for others undiminished somewhere"?

More of a test for the reader who likes Larkin at his high lyrical pitch but wonders about his lower reaches are poems like "Annus Mirabilis" ("Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three") or "Posterity" ("Jake Balokowsky, my biographer,/Has this page microfilmed. . . "). Or a poem titled "The Card-Players" which I have returned to with increased satisfaction:

> Jan van Hogspeuw staggers to the door

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And pisses at the dark. Outside, the rain
Courses in cart-ruts down the deep mud lane.
Inside, Dirk Dogstoerd pours himself some more,
And holds a cinder to his clay with tongs,
Belching out smoke. Old Prijck snores with the gale,
His skull face firelit; someone behind drinks ale,
And opens mussels, and croaks scraps of songs
Towards the ham-hung rafters about love.
Dirk deals the cards. Wet century-wide trees
Clash in surrounding starlessness above
This lamplit cave, where Jan turns back and farts,
Gobs at the grate, and hits the queen of hearts.

Rain, wind and fire! The secret, bestial peace!

Light Verse? Contrived self-advertising obscenity—yet another case of pissing? But I now see that painting better, knowing that its trees are "wet century-wide" ones and that "scraps of song" are croaked "Towards the ham-hung rafters" of that drinking spot. The sonnet opens out wonderfully, the space separating its last two lines a perfect stroke, its final exclamation admiring and awed: it has reverence for life after all. And in "To the Sea" and "Show Saturday" Larkin salutes, in up-to-date genre paintings, kinds of people and ways of life which are stubbornly there, not to be moralized about but wondered at rather.

I will not attempt to deal with "The Building," a grave and chastening poem which, along with "The Old Fools," is the masterpiece of this volume. (The title poem, "High Windows," is impressive, odd, distinctive, perhaps a trifle willed.) Not very much of Larkin's work cries out for "explication," and a reviewer had better be agile in keeping out of the poems' ways. But some summary remarks are in order: let it be stressed how alien is the lucid, complexly sentenced, tonal and sonic character of Larkin's poetry to that of the most highly-reputed contemporary American work—Ammons, Ashbery, Creeley, Levine, Merrill (though here there are affiliations), Merwin, Rich, Snyder, name your favorite. Larkin's gloom, his contempt for and love of life as it's lived, his wise-guy talk, his jokes, don't to my eyes crop up very often or nearly enough in the solemn "making" or intoning that mark our most original products. To which should immediately be added that it's not as if Larkin shares in an English pool of such virtues: the best of Tomlinson, Davie, Roy Fuller, or Amis is very different. I note further that he is virtually the same age as Richard Wilbur, our most brilliant master of the conventions—syntax, lucidity, sanity; but by contrast Larkin is personal, subversive and illiberal. Although technically less gifted than Larkin, it is to Randall Jarrell one might look for the voice and temper of a possible analogue. Or to moments in Frost?

But maybe comparisons are odious after all. On even more tenuous ground, I have always felt some of Larkin's strengths and individuality to issue from the fact that he is the poet as bachelor. Not as gay or beat—just unmarried. I suspect Henry James is not his favorite author, but those

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sentences from James's early letter to Grace Norton occurred to me: "One's attitude toward marriage is a fact—the most characteristic part doubtless of one's general attitude toward life. . . . If I were to marry I should be guilty in my own eyes of inconsistency—I should pretend to think quite a little better of life than I really do." Larkin has defined good writing as "largely a matter of finding proper expression for strong feelings" and as most likely springing from the writer's own experience. Strong feelings can issue from experiencing the absence of what you don't have—the life of "chance and risk, marriage and movement" which has therefore to be imagined.

In the introducton to his record diary, *All What Jazz* (Faber, 1968) Larkin concluded by speculating about readers of his jazz reviews—did they really exist? And he proceeds to summon them into being:

> . . . sullen fleshy inarticulate men, stockbrokers,
> sellers of goods, living in thirty-year-old detached houses
> among the golf courses of Outer London, husbands of ageing
> and bitter wives they first seduced to Artie Shaw's
> "Begin the Beguine". . . men whose first coronary is coming
> like Christmas; who drift, loaded helplessly with
> commitments and obligations and necessary observances,
> into the darkening avenues of age and incapacity, deserted
> by everything that once made life sweet.

Those fleshy inarticulate stockbrokers, even if, as I think unlikely, they read Larkin's pieces about jazz, are not now spending an evening under lamplight in Surrey suburbs, having a go at *High Windows*. But they, along with anybody else willing to give an ear, would be welcomed into the classless impersonal audience addressed by a short, anonymous poem "Cut Grass" which confirms nobody's idea about anything and with which I shall conclude:

> Cut grass lies frail:
> Brief is the breath
> Mown stalks exhale.
> Long, long the death
>
> It dies in the white hours
> Of young-leafed June
> With chestnut flowers,
> With hedges snowlike strewn,
>
> White lilac bowed,
> Lost lanes of Queen Anne's lace,
> And that high-builded cloud
> Moving at summer's pace.

As far as I know Larkin has never saluted Eliot; but it is anyway good that this poem, like the work taken together, is what it is and not another thing.

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BLANCHE H. GELFANT

Fiction Chronicle[1]

" 'TELL ON, OLD LOON! yer supposed to say,' " the Mariner instructs his Guest in John Gardner's story "The King's Indian," and the Guest complies. " 'Tell on,' " says he. On with the tale. On with all the myriad, miraculous tales the freighted ship of fiction picked from all points in the world, and docked now before us, unloads. Assorted treasures. Sea-yarns, ghost-stories, science fictions of "cunning device" and "fabulation," allegories, exhortations, confessionals, diaries, journals, dream-fantasies, romances, satires, love stories, myths of old gods and new, parodies, tricks, hoaxes, tales of chicanery and disguise, and sober stories of quotidian life. Wonderful riches. Perhaps the only plenty in the world still in supply. For this is the age of depletion, the world itself running down. Only the imagination that creates worlds of its own seems never attenuated; nor the Mariner's compulsive will to tell of worlds he has imagined into existence; nor the Guest's willingness to listen. Willingly, I unload the incoming cargo from the ship of fiction and start to sort its treasures; and when the commandeering voice of the story-teller sounds, willingly, I attend. Only to find myself tricked. For this first, this loudest, most exuberant voice belongs to a ventriloquist who captivates by assuming the undeniable, irresistible voices of great story-tellers of the past. So be it, then, John Gardner, you wily trickster. Tell on, I say. I start with you and your handsome book.

As a physical object, a book to be held and looked at, John Gardner's collection of yarns, stories, and tales, *The King's Indian,* is splendidly handsome, a crafted work of care and love. To hold a handsome book is a rare satisfaction nowadays, and so, I think, worth mentioning. The illustrations are meticulously executed, intricate and imaginative—the gaunt, skeletal horse outracing a tornado, the pudgy monk at prayer, the convoluted nudes of the painter's painting, the writer's pensive young daughter, the replicated "klones" in a row, the ship at sea under ambiguous human bodies, the country doctor, and the young sailor, looking remarkably like Gardner himself. Self-reference is Gardner's characteristic mode, to the delight or the despair of his readers: delight to

[1] THE KING'S INDIAN: STORIES AND TALES, by *John Gardner*. Illustrated by Herbert L. Fink. Alfred A. Knopf. $8.95. WINTER IN THE BLOOD, by *James Welch*. Harper & Row. $6.95. EYE TO EYE, by *Diana Chang*. Harper & Row. $6.95. A MONTH OF SUNDAYS, by *John Updike*. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95. CELEBRATION, by *Harvey Swados*. Simon & Schuster. $8.95. DR. HEART: A NOVELLA & OTHER STORIES, by *Eleanor Clark*. Pantheon. $7.95. THE UNDERGROUND WOMAN, by *Kay Boyle*. Doubleday. $7.95. THE COCKATOOS: NEW STORIES, by *Patrick White*. Viking. $8.95. BEAUTY AND SADNESS, by *Yasunari Kawabata*. Translated by Howard Hibbett. Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95. THE IZU DANCER AND OTHER STORIES, by *Yasunari Kawabata* and *Yasushi Inoue*. Translated by Edward Seidensticker and Leon Picon. Charles E. Tuttle. $3.75. THE BOOK OF LONGER SHORT STORIES, ed. by *James Michie*. Stein and Day. $10.00. MODERN BRAZILIAN SHORT STORIES, tr. by *William Grossman*. University of California. $2.25.

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those who pleasure in his parodies, his uncanny imitations of style, not imitations really, but reproductions rather, of the language, intonation, rhythm, mood, dialogue, theme, the reproduction of the faults even, the longueur, aimlessness, tedium of Poe, Melville, Kafka, and Coleridge, to name the predominant figures in this volume; and despair to those who cry for originality and invention, for a Gardner voice of his own. In an interview two years back, Gardner said, "I keep echoing people, borrowing from people. I steal lots and lots of things all the time." Some of Gardner's thefts result in comic and exasperating pastiches, like the long, rambling, much interrupted sea-yarn, "The King's Indian," which the narrator describes perfectly at the beginning as a tale with "no purpose to it, no shape or form or discipline but the tucket and boom of its highflown language and whatever dim flickers that noise stirs up in yer cerebrium." Highflown language, energy of language, love of words—vulnerary, pleached, benthal, acidulous—and sheer pertinacity in pursuing a plot, however meandering or ramified: these qualities charge Gardner's fiction with a vitality of its own. These qualities also tire the reader, just as "circus shows," to which Gardner likened his writing, tire the spectator through their excessive stimulation, their thrills for the sake of thrills. Gardner's Kafkaesque story "The Warden" chills as it thrills not only because of its theme of double imprisonment (prisoners and keepers are walled in together for reasons unstated and probably unknown), but also because of its uncanny replication of Kafka's art. The story seems authentic, but is it a Kafka story, or a Gardner story, or a hoax, Gardner's favorite term, perhaps his metaphor, or perhaps his definition, for fiction? As hoaxes, Gardner's stories are fun, convoluted and full of spirit; as parodies, they are unsurpassable; as games, playful and enlivened—but oddly, I find myself most absorbed in his least self-conscious stories, in those that seem to me least imitative, most autonomous, like "Pastoral Care," and best of all, "John Napper Sailing Through the Universe." In this latter story of a painter who survives his struggle against nihilism, who faces and transcends despair, and achieves a triumphant faith he can express both in life and in art, Gardner seems to me most striking and authentic—without contrivance; direct, touching, humorous, wise, mane; perhaps he is merely being autobiographical. The story, like all the stories in this volume, deals with the conflict between faith and disbelief or nihilism. Beneath all his hoaxing, Gardner is a moralist; and all his tales point the same moral, that faith can vanquish the destructive forces of nihilism, and must. In "King Gregor and the Fool," mad Queen Louisa—mad because she is sane in a mad world—stops the war by her faith in human reason and love. In "The Temptation of St. Ivo," the doubting monk is doomed to perpetual temptation and hopeless wandering because he cannot unequivocally assert his faith. In "Pastoral Care," the Reverend Pick releases the nihilistic impulses of a young revolutionary who bombs the church; but the destruction traces back to the minister who believed against his calling that "It did *not* matter"; *Nothing* mattered. To believe in Nothing maims, kills, destroys. So the garrulous Mariner discovers in "The King's Indian," that convoluted yarn about the monstrous and destructive hoax played by a Mask with no face, a figure of

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Nothingness, which only Faith could discern, challenge, and finally dispel. "Faith and despair," Gardner has stated, "have always been the two mighty adversaries." In these stories, the adversaries clash again and again in open, resounding, and often comic battle; and each time, the stories affirm, if not by their actions, then by their exuberant art, the victory of faith. Above all, Gardner places his faith in fiction. That is why he "steals" from writers, because as creators of fiction they possess what he most esteems—the imagination, the will, the power to shape a personal style, that is, to shape a personal vision. To have shaped one's vision in art is to have asserted one's being; and that *does* matter, as the act of life.

James Welch's fine novel, *Winter in the Blood,* the story of a 32-year-old Indian on a Montana reservation, depends upon understatement, requires it, would be impossible to tell without its restraint. For the story of Indian dispossession is stark and terrible, and, unlike science fiction, true—true to our special stricken history, true to human history, and true to the present. The story implicates victor and vanquished in a shared guilt, the white man for having aggressed, the red man for having succumbed. Whatever the reasons or the excuses, the consequences remain inexcusable. The consequences are here in the book, in the narrator's bruised body and defeated spirit, and in the writer's grace. James Welch is not his protagonist, and that must remain a sole and important consolation. The novel begins with an image of dilapidation, the Earthboy place in shambles, the roof fallen in, the logs "fallen out in chunks," the building "a bare gray skeleton," the tumbleweeds about it "stark as bone"—the Earthboys, except for those buried nearby, all gone. Coming home is a "torture" for the narrator, not only because his eye is swollen, his body sore from a drunken brawl, his mashed knee aching, but also because no one meant anything to him, not even himself. He felt like the prairie that stretched before him, empty and distant. We are accustomed to speak of alienation as the pervasive theme of twentieth-century American fiction, but the alienation of the middle-class white man seems a whining, self-pitying pose beside the experience of the American Indian, separated as he is from his land, his traditions, his people, his customs, his past; separated from himself. All of the narrator's memories are of loss: his father and brother dead, his girl departed, his land, his mother's land, given over to his step-father, even his gun and his lighter, perhaps his only possessions, stolen; his very body, broken. The accident that kills his brother and shatters his knee reflects the consequences of violation. They had violated the nature of Bird, the great horse which should have been free but was broken and tamed into being a "mechanical" cow horse. "A cow horse. You weren't born that way; you were born to eat grass and drink slough water, to nip other horses in the flanks . . . to mount the mares. So they cut your balls to make you less temperamental . . . They haltered you, blindfolded you, waved gunny-sacks at you and slapped you across the neck, the back with leather. Finally they saddled you." The narrator describes the horse's struggle against the man, which proves finally futile. He is describing also the struggle of the Indian against the white man. Old Bird dies at the end of the novel, but the Indian who had sapped his male fierceness already suffers inanition at the beginning. Long

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Knife, who "came from a long line of cowboys" and from a fierce, ball-eating mother, had acquired the shrewdness of the weak and "dumb" man. He was a shirker: "he had learned to give the illusion of work, even to the point of sweating as soon as he put his gloves on, while doing very little." The narrator does nothing but wander through bars and unfamiliar bedrooms, drunk, beaten, dazed, pursuing a girl, or the dream of a girl, who holds the only promise of something better, "the promise of warm things." Though she has stolen from him and deserted him, she arouses "a kind of love," for her eyes express desire for something better than she has. His hope, not only for salvation but for life itself, lies in the possibility of awakened desire. Wanting nothing, caring for no one, feeling only loss, he will die—broken, tamed, and trapped like Old Bird. At the end, after the death of his grandmother, his last link with his lost heritage, he sets out to find the girl. At the end of N. Scott Momaday's prize-winning novel, *House Made of Dawn,* the bruised and sodden Indian, like Welch's narrator, a loser, drifter, drunkard, dupe, mobilizes himself much more dramatically, though perhaps also futilely. He runs the ritual race of the dead, the great triumphant race of his people that takes the fleet runner "beyond pain." Welch's narrator anaesthetizes himself in order to endure the pain of his total dispossession; but apathy, like winter in the blood, is not transcendence, but death. *House Made of Dawn,* for all its brutality, was a poetic and sonorous book, a dazzling literary performance. *Winter in the Blood* is quiet, straightforward, and unflinching, a simple and striking story about death—the death of a people, a tradition, a land, a river, a promise. We must read it to our despair.

Three novels, also about American males, call us to celebration: *Eye to Eye* by Diana Chang, a recapitulation of an artist's successful psychoanalysis; *A Month of Sundays* by John Updike, an account of a renegade minister's spiritual regeneration; and *Celebration* by Harvey Swados, a review of a famous nonagenarian's infamous private life. *Eye to Eye,* a witty, urbane, and good-tempered confession, moves quickly, swept by the narrator's impetuosity as he is swept by an avalanche of emotions, memories, and eye-opening realizations. For a smart and successful "visual artist," George Safford seems naively blind, Not until his analysis has he seen that the artist and the child are inseparable: the child births the artist; the artist releases to expression the child's fantasies and frightening emotions. Nor has he seen that art creates not only an object but also an identity; art creates the artist as he creates the work. Nor has he seen until the end that by writing the story of his analysis, he has "become a writer." Nor has he realized that "words are magical . . . *are* thoughts. Without them you can't think. Words mean so much more than we have taken them for." He begins to delight in metaphor: as he "coughs up" his story, he loses his nervous cough. He appreciates puns: as he sees "eye to eye" with his analyst, he discovers the "I" that was shaped in childhood and remains coterminous with the mature man who still equates love with despair, as the child did, despairing of his mother's love. Love and despair bring him to the analyst's couch, where he lies love-sick and unseeing. There, as he begins to see and to assert and affirm his "I"—to say "Aye" in agreement with the psychoanalyst's "Aye"—he also

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begins to shape the "bizarre triangle" that gives the plot its unexpected and ironic design. *Eye to Eye* hinges upon several coincidences, which give the book a wry and comic overtone; which also make it contrived. Confession from a couch is a narrative contrivance, a way of getting out a story. But the story itself is about contrivance. What else is George's elaborate "three-dimensional appearance," his work of art, but an elaborate contrivance to recapture and reshape his childhood, to bestow upon a child who knew himself unloved and who repressed that knowledge, the structure of his fantasy, a house of Love into which he could enter at will? The concept is charming, and so is the book.

John Updike has always had an enormous power to charm the reader, to enchant him by a scintillating display of talent and verbal energy. I think the reader of *A Month of Sundays* should resist that charm. I think the reader should be stern, take Updike seriously so that he might take himself more seriously and forgo the tricks of his trade—titillation, verbal pyrotechnics, philosophical chicancery, and factitious mushy theologizing. I think we must say No No to the obsessively repetitive sexual encounters, and No No to the obsessive naming of anatomical parts—slippery bellies, liquidy wombs, pubic bushes, varieties of pudenda, buttocks, breasts, nipples, and of course, penises. I enjoyed the reference to buttocks when the Reverend Tom Marshfield was standing bare-assed and shivering in the garden watching his mistress screwing another man. I laughed finally at a woman's breast when it was thrust wholly into Reverend Marshfield's hungry mouth so that he gagged and choked. I sympathized with Reverend Marshfield's anatonomical plight when his penis went limp against the eager body of beautiful, saintly, bigoted Frankie, the only woman Reverend Marshfield did not make in the book. But when all is said and done, I cannot accept Reverend Marshfield's ingenious reasoning that adultery is sacramental, nor the premises upon which this reasoning is based—that opposites are really indistinguishable from each other: they merge in sublime reconciliation. Thus Paradise is nothing else than ordinary life on earth, and soul nothing else than body, What better way, then, for Reverend Marshfield to minister to the aching souls of his women parishioners than to minister to their bodies with his divine instrument which he thrusts generously, democratically, into every orifice in sight? All this I find nonsensical, if peculiarly charming. But I find the Reverend Marshfield's pietistic references to the plight of the modern American woman cheap, and his solution to her problem mockery and sophistry in consummate bad taste: "wherein does the American woman, coded into mindlessness by household slavery and the stupefying companionship of greedy infants, recover her powers of decision, of daring, of discrimination— her dignity, in short?" Ah, *right on,* Marshfield! Where, indeed? And how, indeed, do you with your parodic rhetoric presume? And what, indeed, have you to offer but rhetoric—words, words, words, self-congratulating, self-gratifying, and self-condemning?

Male ego amazes. One would think that Reverend Marshfield, and famous Sam Lumen of *Celebration,* recounting their lives, as both of them do, and discovering the far-reaching extent of their treachery, destructiveness, and venality, would feel shame. But both take occasion to

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celebrate themselves. Both think themselves so important that they suspect everyone of reading their private journals. Who would care, and why? Both see their unleashed sexuality as a divine gift to women. Sam Lumen remembers how he violated his son's fiancée, and drove her to suicide; he knows himself, in his nineties, still driven by lust, a lewd old man who has manipulated his young wife into the arms of his protegé to their shame and his vicarious pleasure. Yet he celebrates himself. His name dignifies him as his personal life does not: he should be judge and prophet (Samuel) and bringer of light (Lumen). But he judges himself easily, and he brings darkness—to his first wife and child, dead with the help of his neglect; to his son; to his son's woman; to his protegé, corrupted by the nearby glamour of Lumen's fame; to the mysterious young man (his son or his grandson?) who appears after twenty-one years to demand his full heritage. Somehow, however, he has benefited children, has been a kind of John Dewey and A. S. Neill combined, or so I gather. The good he has done remains nebulous in the novel, the evil, blatant; and I find less to celebrate than he, though I celebrate survival. In Saul Bellow's novel of a few years back, *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* an elderly man also looks back to what wisdom he can gather (Sammler: one who gathers). One-eyed, having lost an eye in the Nazi holocaust, he sees the truths of the human heart that still elude Sam Lumen. Or at least, he believes he sees them; he trusts. And that in itself is a truth—that human beings can trust in life and in each other, a fact still unfortunately unfathomable to distrustful old Lumen who lives his last celebrating years in paranoiac fear of plots against him. How tangled the plots when characters like Marshfield and Lumen confuse moral judgments and cannot see the difference between simply ordinary homely virtues, the virtues that sustain us from day to day, and the vices by which we are all undermined. I think I am supposed to feel happy at the end of *Celebration,* but I am distressed. I expect more from old age than "good humor" and "serenity," though I would wish for both. I expect wisdom, compassion, and sternness, for without the courage finally to be stern, we lapse into moral slop, and that, I think, would be a reprehensible ending.

The new books of two distinguished cosmopolitan writers, Kay Boyle and Eleanor Clark, share many modern themes: women's activism against war, their courage in facing jail; the quest for identity—perennial and ubiquitous theme; the infiltration of drug culture into middle-class life; the academic scene in both its idealism and its pettiness; and the jeopardies involved in loving, the pain of loss, the danger in pursuit. Eleanor Clark's book shows her versatility, supreme competence, and ranging human interests. She writes short stories that seem imagistic transcriptions of dream experience: "The Ball," "Responsibility," "The Fish," and "The Heart of the Afternoon." She writes a long diary account of a summer in Puerto Rico which transforms geographical space—accurately and meticulously described—into an interior landscape: a hurricane and a heat wave, a shark in shallow water, a polite exchange of fruit—the amenities of nature and society, seemingly ordinary, implicate the tourist in cascading intrigues of politics and emotions, and finally change her life. She writes of summer renters who hire an exterminator, not knowing—

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how could they know?—that after he kills insects, birds, and animals, he will escalate to greater prey; the story is called ironically "A Man of Her Own." She writes a spoofy Jamesian novella about an American student abroad, first delighted and then dismayed by Paris, and like a Jamesian character, finally transformed. In "Dr. Heart," Tom Bestwick (Jamesian name) soon sees that his open, friendly, American manner is *passé*; his doctoral dissertation on the life of the famous French writer S. (Jamesian subject) is *ennuyeux;* and his social life is without *éclat*. He decides to change all this and conform to the new "intellectual fashion" of this city of fashion—to structuralism and the *nouveau roman:* "The trick, he saw with mind-blowing clarity, was not just to read all that moribund, methodophiliac stuff but to *be* it . . . to be bored and boring to the point of no return . . . No content; that was out, vamoosed, *fini*." When he gives as his reason for moving, "Je m'ennuie," he makes life and literature coalesce: he is the *nouveau roman*. As literary criticism, "Dr. Heart" is devastating and facile, and self-damaging, for since it sees the new French novel as merely tedious, repetitious, and boring, it falls into the mimetic fallacy; it imitates the form it criticizes; it dawdles, boringly, over Bestwick's boring un-adventures until it returns him home to America, re-transformed. Eleanor Clark's final story, which I think deserves a better title than "Gloop," depicts the real menace of boredom as both the hippies who have congregated to a Vermont town and its native inhabitants almost become accomplices to rape and murder, because both, gazing at the big church clock, find time slow and heavy, bringing them monotony and nothing to do. Ironically, the witness to the attempted violence dies, the mother who sees her daughter, a trapped, bored divorcée, lying back in ecstasy under the knife. I find the fear of Manson-like "families," a justifiable enough fear that underlies the story, running also through Kay Boyle's novel *Underground Woman,* where the mother of the violated girl does not succumb to shock, but by direct defiance establishes her moral identity.

Underground Woman, like Updike's earlier novel *The Centaur,* depends upon a mythical frame, its characters being modern embodiments of Greek gods and goddesses. These obvious mythical trappings seem to me obtrusive, as do the static discussions of mythic time, its eternal return; of ritual, its reenactment in the present of sacred events of the past; and of the pantheon of gods, its symbolic pattern. Like Demeter, Athena, the protagonist of the novel, mourns the loss of her daughter, but as a human, she must recognize the finality of human loss; unlike Persephone, her daughter will not return with ever-renewing spring. Nor will Athena's husband, for all his wonderful gifts in communicating with the wild creatures of earth. We live and die in linear time, each moment moving us closer to death, and all the wishful literary analogies cannot efface that fact, cannot in fact take us out of the stream of inexorable time and replace us in the continuing cycles of nature. In fact we may be effecting the opposite transformation—making nature conform to our time by robbing it of its power for renewal as we rob it of it resources and health. Athena has tried bravely to live up to her name; she has become a student of Greek myth and teaches its mysteries to not always comprehending students.

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She has tried to realize the double nature her name imposes, to be a woman of both wisdom and love. Now she sees this name as an impossible burden, the legacy of her father: "My father gave me my absurd name [she explains], but I never reproached him for the impossible burden it put on me. I felt it my duty to justify that name, and I went cringing and crawling back to the Greek myths . . . in the ridiculous position of being both the goddess of war and the goddess of peace . . . condemned . . . to this duality . . . always two women, one visible and understandable to everyone, and the other one functioning underground." Her struggle throughout the novel is to release this underground woman, her concealed authentic self; and she does this through consecutive acts of consciousness and courage. She protests the Viet Nam war and goes to jail. She befriends other women and establishes sisterhood. She leaves a lover and rejects dependence. She orders the Family out of her house. Her choice, for all the mythological meanderings and mystique, turns out simple and elemental, the choice between submission and freedom. She pontificates about this a great deal, and perhaps words and more words are necessary for her emergence. If the machinery of this novel seems outdated, the courage it extols is not. Athena's vision of a strong autonomous woman shows Kay Boyle moving a long way from that of her famous lyrical story "His Idea of a Mother." For all its poetry, the idea comes down to this: a mother is a cow. Kay Boyle's beautifully enlarged vision now requires a compressed form, for this novel is laborious, pedagogical like its protagonist, and finally high-flown and elusive. But then the task of unearthing an underground person after forty-three years of submergence is laborious. So I wish to applaud that labor rather than complain.

Patrick White's new stories in *The Cockatoos* are uniformly masterful. They demonstrate once again "the unbroken creative power" for which the Nobel Prize committee praised him in 1973 when it gave him the Nobel award. Whatever the mysteries of creative power, its qualities are clear: intellectual strength and precision, keen observation, emotional richness, rightness of distance and tone, meticulous craft, discipline, moral vision, integrity, sensibility, and consummate control, command, of language. No trickery. No ghosts, "mites," archaic gods, "klones," catatonics. No archness, cuteness, self-reference. No explanations, myths, excuses. Nothing but the things itself: the work: the human consciousness at work: life. Out of the commonplace events of life, White creates an intricate, absorbing, difficult, and inevitable pattern of proliferating meaning and emotion. "Five-Twenty," for example, begins with a lone couple sitting on their veranda, watching the early evening traffic go by, noticing the cars, a red and brown Holden, and the man with the "half-squashed head" who passes by regularly, at five-twenty; this becomes a little event in their seemingly eventless life. Gradually their past unfolds, that of ordinary people, meeting, planning, waiting, marrying, moving through illness to stillness on the veranda, to death; and renewed life. One day, after the arthritic husband has died, the five-twenty man with the squashed head appears at the door asking to use the telephone: "This was the situation she had always been expecting: someone asking to use the phone as a way to afterwards murdering you." Murder would have been facile and cheap.

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White presses his story to an infinitely more difficult denouement, strange, unforeseen and powerful, reverberating to all that has passed and has not come to pass in the woman's meager life. Love. Love is still a creative power. It gives life. The characters want to give life, even to a deformed stranger, as in "Five-Twenty"; or to a familiar spouse, as in "The Cockatoos"; or to a bare, stripped, worthless bum—the thing itself, "bare unaccommodated man"—as in "The Night the Prowler." Here is a story about faith and nihilism that in my opinion surpasses all of Gardner's tale; of rape and violence that transcends the work of writers like Joyce Carol Oates. Here is an *unpredictable* story. For courage turns up in unpredictable places and through unpredictable acts. So does love. Here is a story of self-creation, a self-contained story that needs no pedagogical explanations, for it is all that we need to know, and feel, and feel with, and understand. I will not recount its plot, for surprising though it is, it belongs to the total lasting experience of the story. It leaves me with a rich and puzzling sense of the complexity of moral values, the difficulty of judging moral acts, but with no doubt about the purity of courage, the dignity of solitude, the beauty of love, and the rightness of "the dizzy course of perpetual becoming."

How can one jump from the stories of Patrick White to the fiction of that other Nobel Prize recipient, Yasunari Kawabata? Only the human imagination would dare make that precipitous leap. Only faith in art would embolden us to trust that daring imagination. I do not know how much—or if—national differences account for differences in esthetic sensibility. I can only note that the distinctive mark of Kawabata's sensibility is there from his first work, "The Izu Dancer" (published along with stories of Yasushi Inoue) to his latest and final novel, *Beauty and Sadness*. Like his famous works, *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes,* his new fictions create an extraordinary tension between inanition and eroticism; and an uncanny discrepancy between theme and tone. As in Kafka, in Kawabata the narrative voice remains dispassionate while it relates events of terrible and aberrant passion. "The Izu Dancer" tells of first awakening; set in the mountains, where a lone student falls in love with a young dancing girl, it seems romantic—except that the girl is younger than we thought, a child, and the student curiously drifting into an ambiguous relationship whose consequences we might wish not to foresee. For the consequences of passion in Kawabata are never finite nor innocuous; they create an insidious web that draws in another generation, entangles it, and perhaps even, as in *Beauty and Sadness,* destroys it. Kawabata's geometric design is a quadrangle that emboxes the father and his mistress and his son, and another woman, usually nubile, an innocent or an avenger. In *Thousand Cranes* and *Beauty and Sadness,* because the father has experienced piercing passion, the son cannot: he suffers inanition in the first novel, and is killed in the last. He is sacrificed to a cult of the erotic in which his father is high priest, and his lover high mystery. The father knows the secrets of flesh, how to arouse and degrade. For him, Otoko's breasts seem to have a life of their own, responsive, expressive, assertive. For him every secretion, erection, transformation of her body takes on meaning, a meaning he already anticipated in his lurid fantasies, and now creates. He is a cabalist, and

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love, a bewitchment. It casts a spell of both frenzy and lethargy, and when the spell is over, death seems preferable to life. Otoko tries to kill herself after Oki deserts her, and for twenty years she lives in a sexual torpor. Then Keiko arrives to arouse her to more violent and stranger eroticism, to usurp her body, her past, and her passion. Through Keiko, bent on revenge, the son is drawn into the quadrangle, the lure, sex; the consequence, death. Kawabata recounts these lurid events with the utmost limpidity, with purity of style and cleanness of line. He strips his art to the simplicity of a Japanese landscape painting. Such simplicity, however, has the power to shock and menace. For the art of the novel is inextricable from the sexual obsessions that become perpetuated through art. Otoko remains enslaved to her passion because of the novel Oki has written describing their affair. That novel brought him fame and fortune, and imprisoned her in an unforgettable past that might have been lost to memory but remains always retrievable to the reader. As she reads, she relives the past, and as she paints she tries to keep both her mother and her child alive, on canvas. So obsessions become inescapable, and art seems not a transcendence but a permanent enslavement to the past. Who knows if this thought throws any light on the mystery of Kawabata's suicide? If obsessive passion and art are inextricable, and both enslave the person in the same relentless obsession, then perhaps finally death offers the only release.

The stories of Yasushi Inoue published with "The Izu Dancer" also revolve about obsession—the fear of loss. Loss seems inevitable, as recurrent as the cycle of seasons, as the waxing and waning of the moon. But though one knows its inevitability, one can never be reconciled. In "The Full Moon," the new company director must see his fate already prefigured in the decline of the old company director he supersedes. Still, his fall from power finds him unprepared, and nothing could have prepared him for the shock, the emptiness, the finality of his loss of prestige. In "Obasute," the old woman seems reconciled to losing her place and power in the family, but not the young man, haunted by the legends of old people abandoned. He wants his family intact, though he knows that time leaves nothing whole. And in "The Counterfeiter," time and the exigencies of chance destroy an artist's integrity; he loses whatever talent he had, and becomes a forger; in a way, he has lost his life because it crossed accidentally with the path of an artist of genius. So those that have little lose even the little they have. These are melancholy tales; they make us pensive, wistful, wondering. We know life is uncertain. Sometimes we need to be reminded, quietly.

Finally, two anthologies. One, a paperback of *Modern Brazilian Short Stories,* a trim, unostentatious book that contains a wealth of fiction, introduced by a clear, well-pointed essay, and supported by brief biographical notes. The other, *The Book of Longer Short Stories,* an anthology of English fiction that includes such famous works as Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" and Joyce's "The Dead," with neglected works that now can be remembered; in particular, George Moore's "Albert Nobbs," an amazingly controlled and sympathetic tale of a waiter who is sexually neutral, "neither man nor woman, just a perhapser"; A. E. Coppard's "The

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Black Dog," a restrained but strong country story, realized beautifully on television on Masterpiece Theater a few weeks back; Walter De La Mare's subtly shaded study of a child reflecting his parents' profound unhappiness. I do not find Aldous Huxley's "Little Mexican" as perfect as the editor does; to me it seems arch, over-extended, and old-fashioned; nor do I find Somerset Maugham's thriller "The Hairless Mexican" as thrilling as he—but both works complement the other stories, and make the volume various and new. William Sansom's "Episode at Gastein" compares with Jamesian stories of "the unlived life," like "The Beast in the Jungle," which will always loom, I think, as the supreme monument to that "negative" theme. All in all, these English story-tellers have an impressive authority; they have the certainty of their language, and their landscape, even when they write of foreign places. I say English story-tellers, yet oddly, the two greatest among them, Conrad and Joyce, were not English, and Conrad acquired an entirely foreign language, while Joyce felt that unlike the English he had never had a proper language of his own, and to make up for that, he finally invented one for himself in *Finnegans Wake*. Here, however, the traditional English language emerges as the common hero of all the stories, a flexible medium that vibrates to the finest tunings, that can achieve transparency or become palpably opaque, so that we can move through it or linger and admire its texture and weight. An incredible medium, really, through which such different and distinctive imaginations as that of W. H. Hudson or Graham Green, Somerset Maugham or D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley or Walter De La Mare, George Moore or Joseph Conrad, and James Joyce, achieve expression and art.

The Brazilian stories come to us in translations which I am incapable of judging. I do not know what has been lost, only what can be found—a treasury of fiction that evokes that shock of recognition that Melville called the most authentic and telling response to literature. The portrayal of landscape is everywhere striking, from the opening scene of desolation in the first story, "The Immunizer," to the devastating, hellish streets of the last story, "Sun." Some of the visual effects flash with cinematic starkness and immediacy: "In the distance one could see the lone, spectral figure of a leafless tree on whose branches a flock of black vultures had settled" ("The Immunizer"). Some of the self-revelations are mysteriously elusive and haunting: "I am what never should have been. I am what must be silent. I know it is too late. I must stay in the deserts and unmarked plains of my life, and I fear I shall shorten it. But when death comes I want them to take me and put me in a little boat in this perpetual water . . . down the river, lost in the river, inside the river . . . the river . . . ("The Third Bank of the River"). Some of the moments of childhood indignity are too painful, like starvation: "With tongue in readiness he would place his cheek on the ground next to an anthill. When an ant appeared he would shoot out his tongue . . . retract . . . with the ant stuck to it and would press the infinitesimally small, round thing against the roof of his mouth. He'd place it between his teeth, crush it, and swallow his saliva" ("It Can Hurt Plenty"). Some stories confound us into laughter, like "Piano," in which a couple cannot sell or give away a perfectly good piano for which they have

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no room; no way to get rid of it except to have it thrown into the ocean—at which point officials appear to investigate this ominous, perhaps subversive, act; at which point, the piano gone, arrest imminent, a procrastinating buyer appears ready at last to offer "a good price." Some stories teach moral lessons, like the fairy tale "The Enchanted Ox," which condemns pride; and some raise moral questions, like "At the Side of the Road"—how can simple kindly people breed murderous insatiable sons? So the imponderable mysteries of life become the pleasures of fiction, and these Brazilian stories, so particular in their local details, remind us we can garner these pleasures from everywhere in the world, for art is universal.

So now the argosy is in. The cargo unloaded. The books put in place—varied, profound and pleasurable books, to be treasured. I liked Patrick White's *The Cockatoos,* and if I had to choose one of its stories to anthologize with Conrad and Joyce, I would choose "The Night the Prowler"; and then "The Cockatoos"; and then "Five-Twenty"; and "The Full Belly." All reverberate to the enduring themes of human courage, intelligence, and will. All describe acts of love, guised sometimes as acts of violence. All enact their themes, for in their careful, patient, and compassionate rendering, the stories demonstrate intelligence, courage, and will. In their art, they *are* both quest and fulfillment. I liked *Modern Brazilian Short Stories.* I liked being conducted to a new and unfamiliar landscape that became the interior landscape of the human heart. I liked James Welch's *Winter in the Blood,* though first it froze me into apathy, and then shocked me to awareness. I discovered that a dispossession of feeling is the final defeat of a dispossessed people. I wanted to want something; I wanted for the narrator. I wished he would find the girl he sought, for though she had stolen from him, she had also cared enough to warn him of danger he could not evade. I wished he might have his game leg fixed so that he too could run the race of the dead and so outrun pain. I wished that in that race he would recapture the rituals of his people, and the faith by which they had been vivified. I liked—no, I was smitten by—the stories Kawabata told. I thought I must listen as he told of prurience in the human heart. I admired his ability to loose, and then in his art, to control, the erotic imagination. I liked his characters because they would submit to their passions. On the other hand, I liked Diana Chang's characters in *Eye to Eye* because they freed themselves from obsession. I liked Eleanor Clark's quiet competence, and John Gardner's noisy exuberance—though his fairytales became cute, and his rambling yarns tiresome. I would not reread Gardner, but I would reread Poe and Kafka and Melville, and I have reread "The Ancient Mariner" to take my bearings again. I am glad to find again his eternal "bizarre triangle" of writer, reader and work—the writer compelled to tell his story; the work created to cast its spell; the listener spell-bound to listen, even against his will. So it has been. So be it. Like the Mariner's Guest, like all the Guests arrested in time by the timeless tale, I say "Tell on, old Mariner. Tell on, old crazy loon." I have no wish but to listen.

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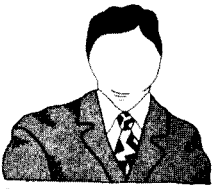
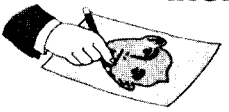
BY JUDSON JEROME





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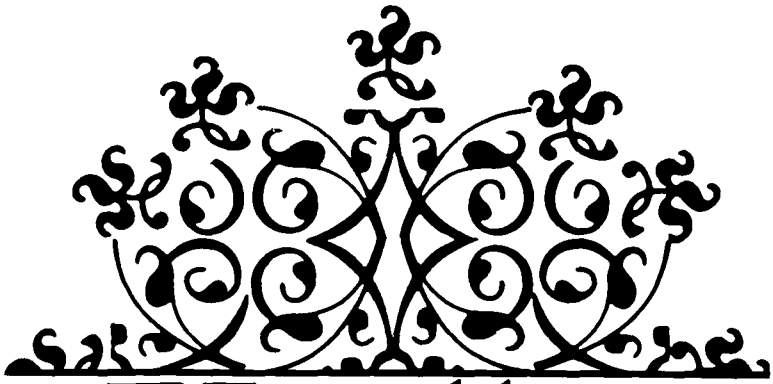

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